

200TH ANNIVERSARY: NAPOLEON'S CONQUEST OF NORTHERN ITALY

MILITARY HISTORY

APRIL 1997

Grant vs. Lee
DEADLY DUEL IN
THE WILDERNESS

SIEGE OF CALCUTTA AND
THE INFAMOUS BLACK HOLE

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LES GROGNARD, CHRIS D. MAINE

Left: Dispatched by General Napoleon Bonaparte to drive the remnants of routed Austrian forces from northern Italy, Maj. Gen. André Masséna annihilates the army of Archduke Charles at Tarvis on March 22, 1797. Masséna's forces had advanced to within 90 miles of Vienna when Austria asked for an armistice on April 11 (story, P. 26).

Cover: In a last attempt to stave off defeat in the Battle of the Wilderness on May 6, 1864, General Robert E. Lee prepares to lead Maj. Gen. John Gregg's Texas Brigade into battle, in *Advance the Flag of Dixie*, by Rick Reeves. After convincing Lee to go back, the Texans charged the oncoming Federals (story, P. 42).

Cover art: Rick Reeves, Collector Historical Prints

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By Jeremy Green

Reporting on the progress of General Napoleon Bonaparte's Army of Italy on December 7, 1796, General Henri J. G. Clarke wrote: "There is nobody here who does not look upon him as a man of genius.... Bonaparte will be put by posterity in the rank of the greatest men."

34 THE SIEGE OF CALCUTTA

By Michael Bedford and Bruce Dettman

Deserted by their leaders in the face of an overwhelming Bengali army, on June 19, 1756, Fort William's remaining defenders selected John Holwell to organize a defense and hoped that, if they could hold out through the day, they might still be rescued.

42 TITANS CLASH IN THE WILDERNESS

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Special Feature

Lieutenant General James Longstreet had warned General Robert E. Lee about the new Union Army general, Ulysses S. Grant. "That man," Longstreet said, "will fight us every day and every hour till the end of this war." In May 1864, Lee put that claim to the test.

58 A LEGIONNAIRE'S FIVE-YEAR ODYSSEY

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In September 1953, a 19-year-old German named Karl Hansen joined the French Foreign Legion. "It seemed romantic, and the recruiting officer painted a rosy picture of travel and adventure," he recalled. "Mein Gott, if I had only known then what was to happen!"

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Vo Nguyen Giap's leadership, like Ulysses S. Grant's, was defined as much by his defeats as by his victories.

The coming month of May marks the anniversaries of two significant battles, fought exactly 90 years apart, that established the reputations of two of history's most controversial great commanders. One of the historic engagements was a battle won, as the Viet Minh under General Vo Nguyen Giap compelled the French defenders of Dien Bien Phu to surrender on May 8, 1954 (see related interview on p. 58). The other, fought in the Wilderness of Virginia on May 5 and 6, 1864 (special feature, p. 42), was a battle lost, but Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant's actions in the face of defeat would lead to ultimate victory for the Union.

In some respects, Giap and Grant are comparable leaders. Giap's fighting career, covered in unprecedented detail in a recent book by Cecil B. Currey, *Victory at Any Cost: The Genius of Vietnam's Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap* (Brassey's, Inc., McLean, Va., 1997, \$25.95), continues to invite debate. Some—myself included—regard him as a flawed strategic genius at best, and Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., editor of our sister publication *Vietnam Magazine*, still considers him an outright butcher in regard to the use of his soldiers—an accusation often leveled at Grant, as well. It was Summers, however, who inadvertently elicited the most concise insight into Giap's genius during what Summers called a "Kafkaesque" negotiating mission to Hanoi in April 1975. When Summers remarked to a North Vietnamese colonel that American troops had never lost a major battle in Vietnam, his counterpart replied, "That may be so, but it is also irrelevant."

Like Grant, Giap made his share of costly blunders and lost his share of defeats—most notably in the Communist Tet Offensive of January-February 1968 and in the Easter-Week Offensive of April-May 1972, the latter of which led to his being replaced as minister of national defense by one of his more tactically proficient disciples, General Van Tien Dung. Like Grant, however, Giap prevailed by sheer persistence, and by his ability to imbue his troops with the conviction



Both American General Ulysses S. Grant and Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap were defined as much by their ability not to be deterred by defeat as they were by their ability to win (left: Cowles Photo Archive; right: Indochina Archives, Berkeley, Calif.).

that their clearly defined goal—a unified, independent, socialist Vietnam—would ultimately be achieved even if, as Giap grimly vowed, it took 10, 20, even 100 years.

For Giap, the fiasco of Tet 1968 was as defining an event as had been his triumph at Dien Bien Phu. Contrary to Communist expectations, the South Vietnamese government did not collapse during the Tet onslaught, all the major urban centers that fell to the Communists were retaken by the swiftly recovering American and South Vietnamese troops, and the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front was destroyed as an effective fighting force. Seemingly unfazed by those disasters, however, Giap simply replaced the Viet Cong losses by infiltrating more North Vietnamese soldiers into the South, revised his strategy, and carried on with the war.

At that same time, the American public was already losing confidence in its government's activities in Vietnam. In October 1967, an opinion poll had revealed for the first time that the majority of Americans doubted their government's ability to uphold the South Vietnamese government. Largely in response to that disturbing revelation on the home front—and to placate an increasingly impatient President Lyndon B. Johnson—the American commander in Vietnam, General William C. Westmoreland, whose troops had won a victory at Dak To in November, confidently declared the war as good as won. The unfortunate timing of Westmoreland's declaration,

made just before the Tet Offensive erupted all over South Vietnam (and all over America's television screens), only served to accelerate the erosion of the American commitment in Vietnam. That unique set of circumstances transformed Tet into one of history's great paradoxes—at once, a galling tactical defeat and the decisive strategic victory for Giap and the North Vietnamese.

Grant's reputation, like Giap's, was built on a tendency to ignore tactical setbacks while pursuing his ultimate objective. As with Giap after Dien Bien Phu, Grant first came to the public eye with

the successful completion of a long and arduous siege. The surrender of Vicksburg, Miss., on July 4, 1863, led to Grant's appointment as commander of the Union Army—and it was in Virginia, as can be seen in this issue, that his will to win was truly put to the test.

While the national resolve of Giap's French and American opponents may not have been as solid as his own, the same could not be said of the Confederate adversary Grant faced when he marched into Virginia in April 1864. For the previous two years, General Robert E. Lee had held the Army of Northern Virginia together through brilliant victories and in spite of devastating defeats. It is no wonder, then, that veterans of the Union Army of the Potomac greeted Grant's arrival with private skepticism, dismissing all his successes in the West with the retort, "He ain't met Bobby Lee yet."

In the Wilderness, Grant met Bobby Lee—and, like Giap in 1968, he suffered a stinging tactical setback. Lee ended up striking the Army of the Potomac's flank not once, but twice, and stopped the bluecoats in their tracks. As Giap did after Tet, however, Grant won the strategic victory by simply refusing to quit. At a point where George McClellan, John Pope, Ambrose Burnside or Joseph Hooker would have retreated, Grant ordered his men to pick themselves up and resume the advance toward Richmond—until, some 11 bloody months later, victory was achieved. J.G.

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VON BREDOW RIDES AGAIN

I was extremely pleased to see "Von Bredow's Death Ride at Mars-la-Tour," by Steven J. Eden (August 1996), and I commend *Military History* for bringing attention to the oft-forgotten, yet vitally important, Franco-Prussian War.

While Professor Eden does a fine job in describing General Wilhelm August von Bredow's charge, some errors need to be corrected. First, French Marshal François-Achille Bazaine commanded some 160,000 men at Metz, not 200,000. Next, Emperor Napoleon III did not order a withdrawal to Verdun on August 14, 1870; he only urged Bazaine to withdraw.

Further, Eden would be hard pressed to convince military historians that Vionville-Mars-la-Tour was the pivotal battle of the war. The battle, a tactical draw but a strategic victory for the Prussians, did cut off the French retreat route to Verdun. It was following the Battle of Gravelotte-St. Privat, two days later, that Bazaine made the decision to retire into the fortress of Metz, where his forces languished until their surrender on October 29, 1870.

Finally, von Bredow's charge, while brilliant and effective, did not win the battle; it merely provided a reprieve on that part of the field. It also helped justify future cavalry charges, which, unlike von Bredow's, proved generally disastrous.

T. Jeff Driscoll
Fredericksburg, Va.

The author replies:

Addressing Mr. Driscoll's points in order:

1. Marshal Bazaine commanded, according to Michael Howard's classic *The Franco-Prussian War*, 176,688 men at Metz, plus one division of the II Corps, which served as the fortress garrison. I do not have strength figures for the garrisons and the associated service and supply troops, but a conservative estimate would total between 185,000 and 190,000.

2. True, Emperor Napoleon III did not directly order Bazaine to withdraw from Metz—a poor choice of words on my part. But on November 13 or 14 Napoleon told Bazaine there was "no time to be lost" and insisted that Bazaine must not let anything interfere with the retreat. Not an order, perhaps, but close to it.

3. I will admit the bit about the "Death Ride" changing the course of European history was a bit hyperbolic, but I still believe Mars-la-Tour was the last chance for the French to inflict a major defeat on the Prussians and extract the Army of the Rhine from Metz. After the battle, Bazaine was so demoralized and his army so

disorganized that there was no chance that he could have escaped, regardless of the outcome of Gravelotte-St. Privat. All else was sequel.

4. Driscoll is absolutely correct about the Death Ride's effect on tactics for the next 40 years, as succeeding generations clung to it as a justification for the retention of heavy cavalry.

Steven Eden
Ft. Leavenworth, Kan.

A NOT-SO-DAMNED YANKEE

It was delightful to read Kevin E. O'Brien's article about my favorite Civil War soldier, Joshua L. Chamberlain, in the August 1996 issue. His coverage was excellent. Readers interested in learning more about Chamberlain could read his 1915 book, *The Passing of the Armies*. A biography by W.M. Wallace was published in 1960. Of course, the movie *Gettysburg* dramatically shows his actions during the battle.

Marshall A. Blank
Redwood City, Calif.

NOT-SO-COWARDLY REBELS

I enjoyed reading Kevin E. O'Brien's story on Joshua Chamberlain in the August 1996 issue, but in describing the famous bayonet charge of the 20th Maine, he misquoted Colonel William C. Oates, commander of the 15th and 47th Alabama Infantry regiments, as having later said, "We ran like a herd of wild cattle." The complete sentence from Oates' book says: "When the signal was given we ran like a herd of wild cattle, right through the line of dismounted cavaliers." Oates had already ordered his men back to re-form on nearby Big Round Top. O'Brien's partial quote changes the meaning of Oates' statement and implies, intentionally or not, that the Alabamians' actions were cowardly.

Recently published research by Gettysburg National Military Park historians has revealed numerous other errors in the popularly held legends of the battle. The most significant revelation was that the 20th Maine did not make an organized "right-wheel forward" maneuver. There was, indeed, a charge, but it was initiated by the Mainers on the left wing of the regiment to recover lost ground and their wounded, who were between the opposing lines. That rescue effort, however, soon became a spontaneous and general response to the disorderly retreat of the 15th Alabama that had just been ordered by Colonel Oates. When Chamberlain and the right wing eventually joined their advancing comrades, it gave the appearance of a right-wheel forward.

O'Brien stated that the attacking 15th and 47th Alabama regiments numbered 500 and 350 men, respectively. In fact, those two units had just endured a grueling 12-hour, 26-mile march immediately before forming into the line of battle. Several of their companies were detached, depleting the strength of the two regiments to about 400 and 150 men, respectively.

The article also stated that the Mainers captured 500 prisoners. That figure was later refuted by Colonel Oates. Military records reveal that the combined actual loss in killed, wounded and captured for the two Alabama regiments was a staggering 42 percent, but even so, that amounted to no more than 231 officers and men.

Finally, I would like to add some balance to the legends surrounding the "heroes" on Little Round Top. It should be known that Oates' Alabamians gained the summit of Vincent's Spur during their last assault. They pushed the left wing of the 20th Maine back onto its right wing, nearly doubling Chamberlain's line into a narrow "V" shape. Authors frequently recount that two of Chamberlain's brothers were with him, but few note that Lieutenant John Oates died fighting alongside his brother on Vincent's Spur. Writers often highlight Chamberlain's postwar career as governor of Maine, but few of them note that Oates became governor of Alabama.

Terry Jackson
Marietta, Ga.

TOUCHÉ!

As a master of theatrical swordplay for more than 50 years (now retired), I could not let pass a correction to Braun McAsh's article on the rapier that appeared in the August 1996 issue of *Military History*.

The "father" of the rapier was the estoc, a long narrow blade designed around 1400 to slip through the gaps in armor. The name comes from the Frankish "to stick."

Camillo Agrippa's book was written in 1553—the 1604 book was the third edition. Achille Marozzo de Bologne's 1536 study of rapier and dagger play was crude.

The author completely ignores the master who set the "final word" on rapier and dagger play—Rodolfo Capoferro da Cagli, whose book, *Gran Simulacro Dell' Arte e Dell' Uso Della Schemma*, was published in Siena in 1610. He pulled together all the possible attacks, parries and body positions to such a degree of clarity that, in 1930, a group of French fencing masters trying to get the Olympic Committee to add épée

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and dagger as a third and fourth weapon based their training on Cagli's book.

Alexander R. Ditts
Burke, Va.

Braun McAsh's article on the rapier contained several myths that have plagued fencing history for generations.

The development of firearms had nothing to do with the rise of the rapier, which, as McAsh himself states, was never really a battlefield weapon. What truly allowed it to become popular was the changing face of 16th-century court society. The legal medieval concept of trial by combat was replaced by the *Code Duello*—illegal, but practiced with almost cultish devotion, with thousands of men killed over affairs of honor. For that type of combat, some sort of weapon standard had to be adhered to, and the lightweight, elegant but deadly rapier satisfied all of the demands.

McAsh states that the rapier's complex hilt was developed because armored gauntlets were no longer in use, but gauntlet's were, in fact, still in use as late as the mid-17th century.

Referring to Achillo Marozzo de Bolognese's *Opera Nova* as a treatise on rapier technique is questionable. His school was geared primarily toward training soldiers.

The author also inferred that at that time the sword was not used for parrying. The concept of parrying with the sword alone had existed at least as long as swords had been equipped with true metal crossguards.

Guards at that time referred to attacks because, in the Renaissance, fencing was a martial art, not a sport, and to win in a real fight one must attack. That explains why fighters in those days attacked "on the pass," i.e., with one leg crossing over the other, as in walking or running. The modern fencing "crab-shuffle" would have been of limited use in the 16th century.

McAsh also stated that the rapier of Vincenzo Savio's time "no longer possessed the weight to cut by percussion." One merely has to visit a museum with a decent sword collection to see how many 16th-century rapiers were quite sufficient to deliver a powerful cut.

The biggest myth in McAsh's article is his statement that the atmosphere in England was "not conducive to the advancement of the art." Two out of the three great Italian men who taught in London in Queen Elizabeth I's time, Rocco Bonetti and Jeronimo, were bested by local fighters armed with traditional broadswords.

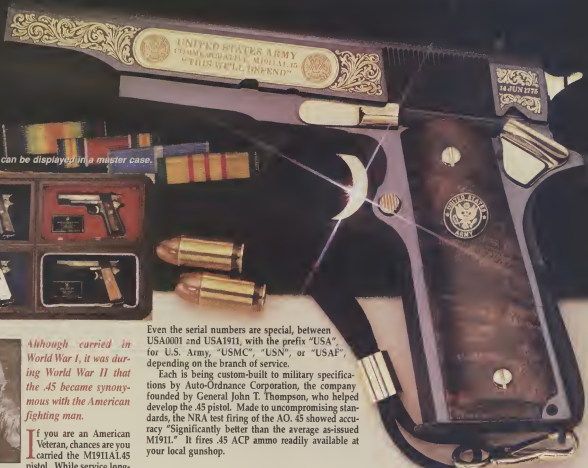
Finally, the illustration is a bit confusing, because the ecusson, or quillon block, is shown in the same color as the blade (steel), when in reality it should be the color of the complex guard (bronze)—the quillons were either forged in one piece with the quillon block or were welded to it.

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S164

The War of 1812 caused Thomas Macdonough to rejoin the U.S. Navy—and gain renown on Lake Champlain.

By Michael D. Hull

In his history of the naval war of 1812, Theodore Roosevelt wrote of Thomas Macdonough: "His skill, seamanship, quick eye, readiness of resource, and indomitable pluck are beyond all praise. Down to the time of the Civil War, he is the greatest figure in our naval history." Yet it was only by chance that Macdonough ever fought in the War of 1812.

Macdonough was born on December 31, 1783, in The Trap (later named Macdonough), Del., the sixth of 10 children of Major Thomas Macdonough, a Revolutionary Army officer and physician, and Mary Vance Macdonough. His Protestant grandfather, James, had emigrated to America from County Kildare, Ireland, around 1730.

At 16, Thomas Macdonough entered the Navy as a midshipman. His first cruise was in the West Indies in 1800, against the French. Then he took part in the war with Tripoli, first aboard the frigate *Constellation* and later on *Philadelphia*.

Shortly after reporting aboard *Philadelphia*, Macdonough and several other officers were assigned to sail a captured Moorish vessel, *Meshbaha*, through the Mediterranean. She ran aground while off Tripoli, and the Americans were captured and spent 19 months in prison before being rescued.

During actions against the Tripolitan pirates, Macdonough distinguished himself in what British Admiral Horatio Nelson called "the most bold and daring act of the age." When *Philadelphia* ran aground and was captured on October 31, 1803, Captain Edward Preble decided to destroy the frigate before the Tripolitans could use her. On the night of February 16, 1804, Lieutenant Stephen Decatur and 74 volunteers—including Midshipman Macdonough—sneaked into Tripoli Harbor aboard a captured 70-ton Tripolitan ketch named *Intrepid*.

Once in position alongside their quarry, Decatur's men scrambled on board *Philadelphia* and swiftly killed or captured her enemy



After years at sea, Thomas Macdonough commanded a fleet on Lake Champlain during the War of 1812—but he made the most of it.

crewmembers, except two who fled and raised an alarm. The Americans then set *Philadelphia* on fire. The flames brought the Tripolitan shore batteries into action, but *Intrepid* escaped to the edge of the harbor, where she was taken in tow by the brigantine *Syren*. The whole raid lasted 20 minutes, and the Americans suffered no casualties.

Macdonough subsequently served on the frigate *Constellation*, then under Decatur again, aboard the schooner *Enterprise*. Promoted to first lieutenant in 1805, Macdonough was reassigned to the brig *Syren*. Before returning to America aboard that vessel, Macdonough distinguished himself by resisting the Royal Navy when they tried to seize an American seaman, in the shadow of the British bastion at Gibraltar.

Back in America in 1806, Macdonough was ordered to go to Middletown, Conn., to assist Captain Isaac Hull for three months in the construction of several gunboats on the Connecticut River. He then settled in

Middletown, joined the local Episcopal church and on December 12, 1812, married his sweetheart, Lucy Ann Shaler.

After serving aboard *Wasp*, John Adams and Essex, Macdonough left the Navy in March 1812 to serve in the Merchant Marine, but that was to be a brief diversion. The United States declared war against Great Britain on June 18, 1812, and Macdonough reapplied for naval duty. He received orders to join the frigate *Constellation* as first lieutenant. He reported to Washington, D.C., but found the ship under repair and was told that she would not be ready for duty for six months.

Itching for action, Macdonough requested a change of duty and was given command of the naval station at Portland, Maine. He had only been there a month when President James Madison ordered him to take command of the U.S. Navy vessels on Lake Champlain, in northern New York.

Apart from some individual naval victories, the war was not going well for the United States. On September 10, 1813, however, Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry boosted American morale with his victory over a British fleet on Lake Erie. But the British still believed they could achieve success by attacking from Canada.

When he arrived at Lake Champlain in October 1813, Macdonough found his fleet in a sorry state. It consisted of two gunboats, one of which was half sunk, while the other's seams were wide open. Ordered to build up the force, he began the formidable task with characteristic dedication. Armaments, stores, craftsmen and seamen had to be transported hundreds of miles from the seacoast to the lake. Shipbuilders were sent to him by the government, and they added two gunboats and the brig *Saratoga*. After wintering his little fleet at Shelburne, Vt., Macdonough lost two of his craft through the bad judgment of one of his officers.

Continued on page 72

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Project Paperclip, designed to give America's military a scientific advantage, was at one crucial time run by a spy.

By Linda Hunt

On a warm spring evening in 1959, two men sat engrossed in conversation in a dark shopping center parking lot in Alexandria, Virginia. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev was threatening to launch rockets with nuclear warheads unless the United States pulled its troops out of Berlin. Now, as a Soviet Intelligence agent scribbled notes on 3-by-5 cards, U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel William Henry Whalen told him everything he knew about the American military's plans to defend the divided city.

Whalen had plenty of secrets to reveal—he worked in the Pentagon for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the heart of America's military defense system. His actions in that position earned him the dubious distinction of being called the highest-placed U.S. military officer ever convicted of espionage.

What is not well-known, however, is that Whalen's job in the Joint Chiefs of Staff was to run Project Paperclip, the project that brought German scientists like Werner von Braun—along with a number of Nazi war criminals—to the United States to work for the military and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Even today, with the vestige of Paperclip deeply ingrained in the American aerospace and defense industries, scant attention has been paid to the fact that the project—still touted in some quarters as having served the national interest—was in fact run by a spy during a crucial time in U.S. history.

Whalen had first met Colonel Sergei Edemski, a known agent of the GRU (*Glasnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravleniye*), the Chief Intelligence Directorate, in 1955 while attending a party at the Soviet Embassy. At the time, Whalen was assistant chief of the Army's foreign liaison office. Two years later, Whalen was assigned to the



Preceded by his wife, William Henry Whalen emerges from the U.S. District Courthouse in Alexandria, Va., after being released on bond on July 7, 1966.

Joint Intelligence Objectives Agency (JIOA), the arm of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that brought 1,600 German and Austrian scientists to the United States between 1945 and 1970 under Paperclip and hundreds more under two similar projects, "National Interest" and "63." Whalen was head of the JIOA during the peak of his espionage activities.

Whalen's colleagues in the JIOA thought he was a braggart. "One day he came in and announced to me and a couple of other people that he was going to be the assistant secretary of defense," recalled Army Lt. Col. Robinson Norris, who worked in the JIOA in 1960 and 1961. "I said, 'Oh, how do you know that?' And Whalen said, 'My mother delivered thousands of votes in New York state for John Kennedy, and he's going to make me assistant secretary of defense.'" Norris laughed, then said, "I thought that was rather presumptuous."

Whalen was also an alcoholic, consuming at least a pint of liquor a day. His heavy

drinking had caused his health to deteriorate. Whalen's once-towering 6-foot-3-inch frame was stooped over from arthritis and bouts with multiple sclerosis.

"After this thing broke, I had people I knew come up to me saying, 'He drank, he borrowed money,'" recalled Air Force Colonel Stone Christopher, who headed the JIOA in 1958 and 1964. "I said, 'Why the hell didn't you tell somebody? That's an indication.'"

In addition to Whalen's alcoholism, court records showed that the Army colonel was deeply in debt to numerous credit bureaus and businesses throughout northern Virginia. It was only a matter of time before the smooth-talking Colonel Edemski put Whalen's weaknesses to work for the Soviet Union.

From 1959 until mid-1963, Whalen traded the nation's secrets for envelopes stuffed with cash—about \$14,000 in all. According to Army Intelligence files, he gave the Soviets at least 35 classified U.S. Army manuals describing nuclear artillery and missile capabilities, along with the locations of Hawk and Nike missile sites in West Germany. He also described Strategic Air Command operations and pinpointed the locations of mobile combat units armed with nuclear weapons in West Germany. Whalen gleaned much of that information from casual conversations he had with Pentagon colleagues.

Paperclip was another topic that interested the Soviets. In 1959, at the height of Whalen's spying activities, hundreds of Paperclip scientists were working at nearly every military installation in the United States and for most key defense contractors, including Lockheed and Martin Marietta. As JIOA director, the 44-year-old Army officer had access to Paperclip files containing information about top-secret, classified

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With no plane available to carry the torpedoes, Jack Cram launched them from his own amphibian.

By Richard Bauman

Resourcefulness, often spawned by desperation, repeatedly produced curious tactics and extraordinary results for U.S. forces during World War II. Major Jack R. Cram, flying his Consolidated PBY-5A amphibious airplane, was a stellar example.

Cram flew his plane, *Blue Goose*, to Guadalcanal on October 14, 1942. Part of the cargo he had brought from the U.S. naval base at Espiritu Santo, 550 miles to the south, were two naval torpedoes. Too big for the cargo bay, the "tin fish" were carried in specially rigged racks under the PBY's wings.

Approaching Guadalcanal's Henderson Field before landing, Cram saw smoke and flames shooting from ammunition and fuel dumps. Hangers and buildings were destroyed, and the runways were full of shell craters. The base had been heavily shelled the night before by the Japanese battleships *Kongo* and *Hama*. Thirty-two dive bombers and about half the fighter aircraft had been destroyed. Coastwatchers reported that more enemy ships were on the way.

On the night of October 14-15, the Japanese cruisers *Chokai* and *Kinugasa* lobbed 752 8-inch shells at Henderson, setting more gasoline on fire and wrecking more planes. Early in the morning of October 15, lookouts reported several enemy destroyers and five troop transports on the way. Their attack apparently planned to coincide with a push from Japanese troops on the island, the invaders intended to trap the outnumbered and undersupplied Marine defenders in a pincer movement. The enemy vessels were expected to arrive by midmorning, and the situation was grim.

Cram's PBY was one of the few planes to escape damage during the naval bombardment. Three dive bombers and a handful of Grumman F4F fighters were also still airworthy. A few of the less badly damaged



Using his Consolidated PBY-5A as a makeshift torpedo bomber, Major Jack R. Cram participates in an attack against Japanese troop transports on October 15, 1945.

planes could be patched and ready to fly later that morning, but not a single torpedo bomber could be repaired that day.

After hauling the torpedoes from Espiritu, Cram was frustrated. "Those damn torpedoes aren't going to do anybody any good sitting around here," he told a fellow officer. "I'm going out and drop them." His sanity was questioned and he was reminded that his flying boat was so slow that he would be unable to get near an enemy ship without being blown out of the sky.

Despite the odds, Cram felt that he had to try. Presenting his idea to Maj. Gen. Ray S. Geiger, he reasoned that if he approached the Japanese from the seaward side, he could distract some of the enemy's anti-aircraft fire and give the dive bombers a better chance to get in with their bombs. If he was lucky, he could even devise some way to launch his torpedoes from under the wings of the PBY. "Hell," he told Geiger, "I might even hit something."

Cram's PBY was not a torpedo plane, and Cram's chances for success were not good. Still, Geiger admitted, the situation was desperate and definitely called for desperate measures. He reluctantly agreed.

Cram found the officer in charge of dive bombers worrying over 12 Douglas SBDs,

two Bell P-39s rigged with 500-pound bombs, two Bell P-400s (export versions of the P-39) carrying 100-pound bombs, and five escorting F4Fs. They discussed the mission and agreed that the PBY and dive bombers would be in the air at 10 a.m. "We'll come down from the land side," he told Cram, "and you start your dive when we do." More enthusiastic than ever, Cram set his crew to readying *Blue Goose* for its sortie.

Never having dropped a torpedo before, Cram went looking for someone to give him basic instructions on how to do it. The pilot he found, Lt. Cmdr. Leroy C. Sim-

pler, commander of Navy fighter squadron VF-5, was not a torpedo man, but his brother was. The pilot gave Cram all the information his brother had passed on to him. Cram learned that the drop should be made at less than 180 mph, which was a snap for his slow-flying PBY; he needed to be about 200 feet above the water and about 700 yards from the target.

It was 9:30 a.m. when Cram finished his accelerated course on torpedoing ships, and the flying boat was ready to go. Wires had been strung into the cockpit through both side windows for manual release of the torpedoes. Satisfied with the preparations, he and his crew boarded *Blue Goose*.

The shell craters on one runway had been filled with dirt. The dive bombers took off first and headed inland. They would make their run low across the land to avoid detection by the enemy, while Cram would come in from the sea.

The PBY lumbered down the runway and lifted heavily into the air. In the harbor was "a sight that was insulting," noted Robert Sherrod in his book *History of Marine Corps Aviation During World War II*. "So certain were the Japanese about elimination of air opposition that they stood off

Continued on page 80

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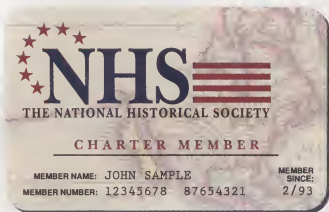
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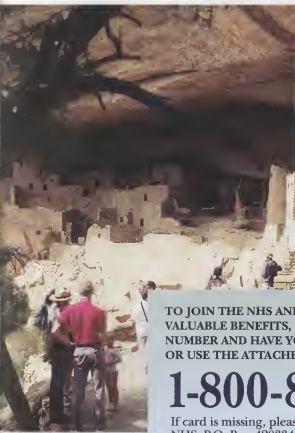
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C703MS

Two hundred years ago, British seamen staged a mass mutiny at Spithead—without deserting their country.

By Simon Barclay

Fletcher Christian's taking of HMS *Bounty* in 1789 has become the most romanticized mutiny in British naval history, helped by the exotic backdrop of South Pacific islands. More than seven years later, in the spring of 1797, a far more serious mutiny took place—this time in the Royal Navy's backyard, the English Channel—which threatened Britain's existence as a sovereign nation.

Britain had been at war with revolutionary France for five years, and the morale of her people was at its lowest ebb. In the fall of 1796, Spain joined the French cause, bringing with her a powerful navy. The Royal Navy was outnumbered nearly 2-to-1, and a massive French army was gathering at the Dutch port of Texel. In February 1797, a halfhearted invasion attempt was foiled at the Welsh town of Fishguard, but a more serious French effort to invade England or Ireland was clearly imminent.

Then, in April 1797, unrest began to spread through the crews of the Channel Fleet, which was anchored at Spithead, off Portsmouth. The seamen sent out a petition to the Admiralty via Lord Richard Howe, respected commander of the fleet, with low pay, poor treatment of the sick aboard ship and inferior quality of provisions while at sea among the list of grievances.

Of those wrongs, the rate of pay caused the most resentment. Wages had been fixed by an act of Parliament almost a century and a half earlier, and the cost of living had doubled since then, due to war inflation and a banking crisis that February.

Lord Howe was sympathetic to his men's grievances, but he did nothing until he received further petitions from other ships in the fleet. Just as he passed those to the Admiralty, his ill health led him to stand aside in favor of his second-in-command, Admiral Lord Bridport. Bridport received a reply from the First Lord of the Admiralty, George, the second Earl of Spencer, telling



British seamen complain about the poor quality of their rations to an officer—who seems sympathetic but unsure of what to do about it—shortly before the mass breakout of mutiny at the Nore in May 1797.

him to identify the ringleaders of the unrest but otherwise take no action. At the same time, he heard that the crews of *Queen Charlotte* and *Royal Sovereign* planned to refuse to sail until a full response was given.

Spencer promptly ordered the fleet to sea. Bridport complied reluctantly and, as he expected, the fleet refused. Taking the initiative, Bridport invited delegates from each ship to come aboard *Queen Charlotte* to discuss their grievances. The seamen proposed that normal ship's rules continue to be followed and orders be obeyed, except those to sail. If no word came from the Admiralty within 48 hours, however, all officers would be removed from the ships and sent ashore.

The fleet was in mutiny. Nevertheless, discipline was maintained. Although some factions were sympathetic with the revolutionaries across the Channel, this was not

an ideological dispute. The men recognized the peril Britain was in and declared that if the French put to sea, the fleet would sail against them immediately.

Shortly before the deadline, word that the Admiralty had agreed to a small pay raise was relayed to the delegates on *Queen Charlotte* with the hope that "the seamen may (now) show their good dispositions by returning to their duty as it may be necessary that the fleet should speedily put to sea to meet the enemy." Sensing they now held the upper hand, the sailors' delegates promised only to consider the offer and raised the matter of pensions, poor food and medical treatment.

By that time, the Earl of Spencer was convinced that the Admiralty had conceded enough ground and was concerned that the sailors' demands would only increase. He was right. Early on April 19, the delegates confirmed that they were now insisting on a higher pay rise and a royal pardon for their actions. Spencer agreed, on the condition that the remaining disputed matters be set

aside for a later settlement. Distrusting Spencer and believing the Admiralty would speedily retaliate for the mutiny, the seamen demanded to see a written pardon signed and sealed by King George III before they would return to their normal duties.

Spencer traveled back to London. After meeting with Prime Minister William Pitt and the king, he obtained the pardon and a promise from Pitt that the proposed pay raises would be laid before Parliament. He returned to Spithead six days later and delivered the news to the men, who responded with loud cheers.

It was too good to be true. When Bridport ordered the fleet to sea on April 24, only six ships obeyed. Having tasted power, the men on the mutinous ships wanted certain officers removed before they would sail. Fortunately for the Admiralty, the winds were against the fleet and the ships could



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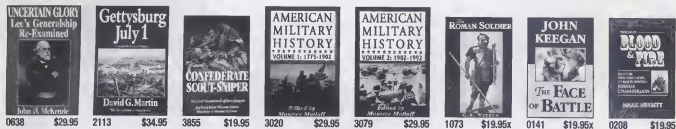
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not move far from their anchorages anyway. Less fortunately, a letter sent to the commanding officers on May 1 showed that the Admiralty was preparing to use marines to quell any further mutiny. The letter's contents became known to the crews, and they now suspected Parliament of stalling over their pay raise. The crew of *Mars* was even believed to be considering seizing the ship and turning her over to the French.

When the delegates returned to *Queen Charlotte*, her captain refused to let them board and ordered his marines to use force if necessary. The marines promptly took the seamen's side. Hearing of this, *London's* captain locked his crew belowdecks, but they broke out and tried to take the ship. One man made for the forward swivel gun, but the first officer shot him dead. He and the captain were then seized by the crew, and only the intervention of the delegates prevented a double lynching.

The crews of 18 ships in the fleet expelled their officers. Most of the officers were treated with respect, but it was clear that if they did not leave they would be thrown overboard. At the same time, news of a growing enemy armada reached London from an American merchant ship out of the northern French port of Brest.

The prime minister took control. He rushed the wages bill through both houses of Parliament, and on May 10 the act received royal assent. Lord Howe spent two days touring the ships and addressing the crews. On May 13 he met in conference with the delegates and accepted a list of 49 officers to be dismissed, including one admiral and four captains.

The mutiny at Spithead formally ended on May 14, though the Admiralty's problems were not yet over. Seeing the Channel Fleet's success, elements of the North Sea Fleet mutinied shortly afterward at the Nore. Their leader, a mentally unbalanced agitator named Richard Parker, had ambitions of proclaiming a floating republic. Even when the Admiralty agreed to the mutineers' demands, Parker refused to end his strike, but he soon lost support. Whereas the leaders of the Spithead mutiny dined with the fleet commanders to celebrate the end of the dispute, Parker and several of his intransigent comrades were hanged from the yardarm.

The French never capitalized on Britain's momentary weakness. The Channel Fleet soon had France's invasion force trapped in its ports for the rest of the year. If any more proof of the mutineers' loyalty was needed, it came at the Battle of Camperdown on October 11, 1797, when the Royal Navy routed the fleet of the Batavian Republic (as the Netherlands had renamed itself when it allied with revolutionary France). After that battle, the French, under the influence of the rising star General Napoleon Bonaparte turned their attention to the Mediterranean and a new threat—Horatio Nelson. □

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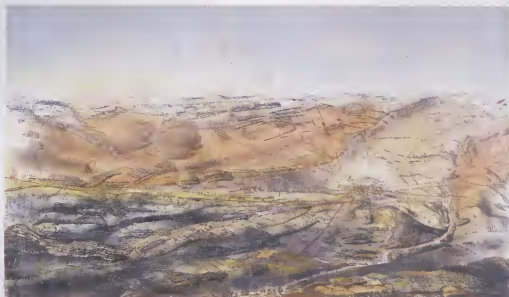
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In his first campaign outside of France, General Napoleon Bonaparte turned the outnumbered, ragtag Army of Italy into a force that beat all Austrian comers.

By Jeremy Green

The newly appointed 26-year-old commander in chief of the French Army of Italy arrived at his headquarters in Nice on March 27, 1796. Scar-lipped Jean Mathieu Philibert Sérurier, adventurous Pierre François Charles Augereau, and calculating André Masséna were all smirking as they prepared to meet this political soldier who had gained his rank not by heroism in war, but by firing his cannons at the Parisian mob, thereby saving the Revolutionary government—and by marrying the discarded mistress of Paul Barras, an influential member of France's executive Directoire.

The youthful commander, who according to one contemporary looked more like a mathematician than a general, eagerly showed the portrait of his beautiful new wife, Josephine de Beauharnais, to the amused older soldiers. When he began to discuss the campaign to come, however, their impression of General Napoleon Bonaparte abruptly changed. Augereau confided to Masséna that this "little bastard of a General" frightened him. All three divisional generals were impressed by their commander's energy and commitment to their future success. "He put on his General's hat," recounted Masséna, "and seemed to have grown two feet. He questioned us on the position of our divisions, on the spirit and effective forces of each corps, prescribed the course we were to follow, announced that he would hold an inspection on the morrow and on the following day attack the enemy."

The Army of Italy that Bonaparte inherited was a ragged, disgruntled lot of soldiers short of pay, rations and supplies. On his arrival at Nice, young Bonaparte faced a mutiny of the 209th Demibrigade, which refused to move forward, claiming it had no money or shoes. The commanding general grasped the situation immediately as he addressed his dispirited men: "Soldiers! You are hungry and naked; the Government owes you much but can give you nothing. The patience and courage which you have displayed among these rocks are admirable, but they bring you no glory—not a glimmer falls upon you. I will lead you into the most fertile plains on Earth. Rich provinces, opulent towns, all shall be at your disposal; there you will find honor, glory, and riches. Soldiers of Italy! Will you be lacking in courage or endurance?" The troops were immediately won over by Bonaparte's oratory, but the problems ahead

Having defeated every army that tried to relieve the Austrian force bottled up there, General Napoleon Bonaparte accepts the Surrender of Mantua, February 2, 1797, in a painting by Hippolyte Lecomte.



Bonaparte squelches yet another Austrian threat in Bataille de Rivoli, by V. Adam. Bonaparte won the battle, as he did the entire Italian campaign, by skillful use of the central position.

were still formidable. The 37,000-strong French Army of Italy faced a total of 52,000 Austrian and Piedmontese troops, although for the moment, those enemy forces were separated by mountains—and mutual distrust.

The divisional commanders who presented themselves to Bonaparte made a redoubtable trio. At 53, the tall and gloomy Sérurier was the eldest, with 34 years in the old Royal Army. In sharp contrast to Sérurier was the 38-year-old Augereau, whose humble origins in the gutters of Paris did not prevent him from becoming one of France's most accomplished swordsmen, as well as an able tactician and popular commander. Masséna, who previously had served with Bonaparte at Toulon, was already famous as the victor of the Battle of Loano and would prove to be one of Bonaparte's most capable generals. In addition to those three, Napoleon had

some 19,500 soldiers dispersed farther north at Alessandria. The other two armies immediately facing the French consisted of the 11,500 Austrians under General Eugen Graf von Argenteau in Acqui and along a line of outposts from Carcare to Genoa; and the 20,000 Piedmontese troops under General Michel Colli strung out along a line from Ceva to Cossieria, where they were strengthened by an Austrian detachment under the command of General Johann Provera. Combined, those forces would have been overwhelming. Eager to take advantage of their divided state, Bonaparte immediately began to assemble his army to seize the offensive.

The French commander's primary objective was to destroy General Colli and drive Piedmont out of the war. Careful study of the maps with Berthier indicated that the town of Carcare, the central position, was the vulnerable link joining the troops of Piedmont and those of Austria. By concentrating his forces at that point, Bonaparte could attain numerical superiority over each of his isolated adversaries. Masséna and Augereau were ordered to move on to Carcare. To achieve a successful attack, Sérurier would create a diversion around Ormea to occupy Colli's attention. At the same time, 6,800 men under Generals François Macquart and Pierre Dominique Camier would demonstrate before Cuneo, while Brig. Gen. A.E.F. de La Harpe's division would move toward Sasello, linking up with French Brig. Gen. Jean Baptiste Cervoni, who would continue his activity in Voltri.

All of those operations were intended to go into effect on April 15, but on April 10, the Austrians struck first, attacking Cervoni's isolated brigade at Voltri. Ironically, Beaulieu's attack actually helped Bonaparte. By revealing his true position, the Austrian commander showed himself to be too distant to offer any aid to Colli or Argenteau.

Although he had been taken by surprise, Cervoni managed a masterful retreat before Beaulieu's vastly superior force, while French Colonel Antoine Guillaume Rampon held off attacks by Argenteau's troops. The Austrian offensive was soon curtailed.

Ignoring Beaulieu, Bonaparte moved immediately against Argenteau, hoping to secure an initial victory that would give the French the freedom to attack Colli's Piedmontese troops. On April 12, 9,000 Frenchmen charged Argenteau's 6,000 surprised Austrians at Montenotte. While the 7,000 French under General La Harpe began a frontal attack on the Austrian position, Masséna, at the head of Brig. Gen. J.F.X. de Menard's brigade, attacked the Austrian right flank. Argenteau ordered a retreat, but it turned into a rout, leaving him with only 700 men when he arrived at



Bonaparte had gained some notice at Toulon in 1793 and in Paris in 1795. His Italian campaign, however, brought him international fame.

Dego. The Battle of Montenotte, Bonaparte's first victory, was complete. Captured enemy muskets were distributed among the thousands of French soldiers under Augereau's command.

Learning of Argenteau's defeat at Montenotte and finding Voltri abandoned by Cervoni, Beaulieu renounced his initial objective. His new goal was to join his troops with the remainder of Argenteau's soldiers at Dego, as well as with Colli's Piedmontese. Bonaparte, meanwhile, correctly deduced from his maps that Beaulieu would not cross the mountains, nor would he be a factor in the next few hours. The young French leader could therefore concentrate on his main objective, Colli's Army of Piedmont.

Assembling 10,000 men—Augereau's entire division and a portion of Masséna's—Bonaparte directed them toward Ceva via Millesimo and Montezemolo. With the addition of Sérurier's troops, who were ordered to envelop Colli's right, the French would have 25,000 soldiers to combat Colli's 20,000. Meanwhile, Generals La Harpe and Masséna, with the remainder of Masséna's division, marched across the hills to Dego to prevent Argenteau and his regrouping Austrians from interfering with the main French thrust against the Piedmontese army. Colli, meanwhile, had moved on Millesimo.

On the morning of April 13, Augereau struck the left wing of the Piedmontese forces at Millesimo. All had been going favorably as the French advanced upon Ceva until Augereau came upon the ruins of Cosseria Castle, where a small garrison of 900 grenadiers under Austrian General Provera was defying French attempts to dislodge them. Although Augereau won the Battle of Millesimo, Provera's continued resistance was causing Masséna to delay his attack, which Bonaparte had instructed could begin only after Cosseria had fallen. A valuable 24 hours were lost.

The next morning, April 14, the situation improved. At noon, Masséna's troops attacked Dego. During the assault, Murat led two squadrons of dragoons on his first charge in a major battle. His wild dash was so effective that he was later mentioned with honor in

the victor's dispatch to the Directoire. Masséna took most of the 5,000 Austrians prisoner, along with 19 guns. News also arrived of the long overdue surrender of Cosseria Castle, and Colli, at last, could be attacked openly. Leaving Masséna to occupy Dego, Bonaparte retraced his steps westward with La Harpe, hoping to meet Sérurier's division near the town of Ceva.

On the exposed French right flank, however, Masséna's jubilant troops had left their positions to forage for food and plunder. In the early hours of April 15, the disorganized French army was surprised by five Austrian battalions under General Philipp Vukassović, who had received orders erroneously commanding his appearance at Dego on the 15th instead of on the 14th.

The Austrian attack was catastrophic for the French. According to Lieutenant Philippe-Paul Ségur (who would later be Bonaparte's aide-de-camp), Masséna's army narrowly escaped in his nightshirt from the bed of his paramour, Silvia Cepolini. Masséna's men were routed and all their guns lost.

Once again, Bonaparte canceled his assault on Ceva. Urging on the reserve force and La Harpe's 8,000 cursing troops, he advanced to recapture Dego. During that attempt, his chief of battalion, Jean Lannes, fought with such reckless bravery that Bonaparte instantly promoted him to the rank of colonel. At a cost of another 1,000 French casualties, Dego again was secured.

Meanwhile, on the left flank, Sérurier and Augereau succeeded in driving Colli back from Montezemolo to Ceva. From the heights of Montezemolo, the enthusiastic Bonaparte encouraged his men by remarking, "Hannibal crossed the Alps; we have turned them!"

On April 16, Augereau made a premature assault on Colli's army at Ceva and was repulsed with heavy losses. Leaving La Harpe's men to garrison Dego, Bonaparte sent Sérurier and Masséna to join Augereau's attack. Colli, wisely noting the threat to his flanks, retreated to Mondovì. Bonaparte consolidated his forces to the left and opened a new line of communications along the Tanaro Valley to Ormea. Realizing that Bonaparte had cut him off from his Austrian



Upon assuming command of the Army of Italy, Bonaparte took advantage of the geographic separation and mutual distrust that divided the Austrian and Piedmontese forces. Following his first victory at Montenotte, he began eliminating enemy armies one by one.

allies, Colli strengthened his position at Mondovì by destroying the bridges and erecting stone fieldworks.

On April 21, Sérurier's infantry charged Colli's position from the left, Masséna moved up in front, and Augereau led the flank attack. During one skirmish, the most experienced French cavalry officer, General Henri C.M. Stengel, was mortally wounded. Murat, now leading the cavalry, threw back the Piedmontese and pursued them onto the plain.

The French victory at Mondovì was the turning point of a campaign that had begun just 10 days earlier. On April 23, as the French forces were advancing on Turin, King Victor Amadeus II asked for peace terms. On April 28, the Armistice of Cherasco ceded control of Piedmont to the French.

By brilliantly concentrating his forces at critical places and times, Bonaparte had driven one of his Austrian opponents into Lombardy, while forcing Piedmont to sue for peace. Through his cunning economy of force, tight security and the direction of every movement by galloping from column to column, the French commander had gloriously fulfilled the promises he had made to his men on March 27.

The French army then paused to reorganize. During that delay, Beaulieu evacuated Alessandria and crossed the Po River at Valenza. Bonaparte, having reinforced his army to 36,000 men by acquiring the troops of Generals Macquart and Garnier, also opened a new line of communications with French forces on the Col di Tende.

Bonaparte now faced a difficult problem: He had to cross the Po without a bridging train while facing Beaulieu's army. The French general-in-chief decided to cross at Piacenza, 50 miles from Valenza. Masséna and Sérurier would mount a diversionary operation at Valenza while a special Corps d'Elite of select grenadiers, commanded by General Claude d'Allemagne, rushed to Piacenza and established a bridgehead there.

On May 7, Colonel Lannes led d'Allemagne's advance guard of four battalions over to the north bank of the Po. Beaulieu received news of the crossing, however, and hastily dispatched Generals Antal von Lipthay and Philipp Vukassović to counter the French. On the morning of May 8, d'Allemagne clashed with Lipthay.

During the following night, Beaulieu's converging columns came into violent conflict with French troops at Codogno, during which General La Harpe was killed by shots fired by his own men. Berthier, the chief of staff, took over command of the French, and Beaulieu ordered a full retreat over the Adda River at Lodi.

Although the fall of Milan was certain, Bonaparte pushed his men onward toward Lodi, hoping to finish off Beaulieu's force. The French arrived on May 10, hoping to finish off Beaulieu's force, to find the whole Austrian army safely across the Adda, leaving 10,000 men and a dozen cannons at the bridge as a covering force. A determined Bonaparte personally led the charge of grenadiers. The first charge failed, but a second effort was successful. "It was only on the evening of Lodi," Bonaparte recorded later, "that I believed myself a superior man, and that the ambition came to me of exe-



cuting the great things which so far had been occupying my thoughts only as a fantastic dream." A few days later, in Milan, the French commander confided to Marmont, "They [the Directoire] have seen nothing yet....In our days, no one has conceived anything great; it is for me to set the example."

The Directoire, however, was already jealous of the young general's success. In a dispatch received the night of May 10, Bonaparte learned that they had decided to split command of the Army of Italy between himself and General François Étienne Christophe Kellerman. Bonaparte refused, explaining in a letter that one had commander was better than two good ones. Accompanying his letter was another large convoy of plunder for the Directoire, which helped persuade them to back down. Kellerman graciously sent 10,000 reinforcements, together with his own son to serve on Bonaparte's staff.

One month and two days after opening the campaign, Bonaparte entered Milan to a hero's welcome. This popular acclaim did not last long, however, as hard cash, supplies and art treasures were plundered by the army and the French government. On May 22, Bonaparte left Milan, again in pursuit of Beaulieu, but returned to Milan and Pavia two days later to put down local revolts. That accomplished, the French stormed the town of Borghetto on May 30, scattering Beaulieu's forces. On June 1, Austrian scouts surprised him and his staff in the village of Valeggio, and he only escaped capture by vaulting over several garden walls, with one boot missing.

Exploiting the success at Borghetto, Augereau advanced on Peschiera, Sérurier moved on Castel Nuova and then Mantua, and Masséna seized Verona. Beaulieu retreated up the shores of Lake Garda to Trent, but 4,500 of his men were cut off and driven into Mantua. Mantua was an imposing fortress that was equipped with 316 guns and a garrison of 12,000 men. A French attempt to storm

the city on May 31 was unsuccessful. By June 3, Mantua was fully invested by Sérurier, Augereau, d'Allemagne, Lannes and General Charles Edouard Saul Jennings of Kilmaine's cavalry. During the next few weeks, Bonaparte collected art treasures from the Papal States and Tuscany. More important, he gathered large cannons from Fort Urban and other cities of Tuscany for the Mantua siege.

On June 29, Josephine joined her husband in Milan. On that same day, however, the first Austrian push to relieve Mantua began with Field Marshal Dagobert Sigismund Graf von Wurmser taking command of Beaulieu's army and a force of 50,000 soldiers. Wurmser's army advanced in three separate corps—one driving down the west shore of Lake Garda, another pressing down the east shore, and the third pushing through the Brenta Valley. On July 29, the central column pushed Masséna out of Verona. Moving on the west shore of Lake Garda, Austrian General Peter Quasdanovitch was checked by Augereau at Brescia on August 1. The situation became so grave that Bonaparte ordered every available man to reinforce his northern front. The siege of Mantua had to be abandoned and the guns captured from the Mantua garrison, which was now free to operate and attack the French rear. A de-



Top: Major General André Masséna became one of Bonaparte's most able division commanders. **Above:** Major General Barthélemy-Catherine Joubert also proved invaluable in the Italian campaign.

ILLUSTRATIONS: ANDRÉ S.A. BROWN MILITARY COLLECTION

spondent Bonaparte now envisioned defeat.

As Würmsers and Quasdanovitch advanced, however, they again offered the young French general an opportunity. If time would allow, he would attack each wing of the Austrian army before it could unite. While Würmsers delayed at Valeggio for three days, Bonaparte planned his attack. On August 3, Augereau battled Würmsers advance guard near Castiglione delle Stiviere. For preventing both Liphay and Würmsers from aiding Quasdanovitch, Augereau would later be titled the Duke of Castiglione.

On the same day, at Lonato, Masséna was hotly engaged with Quasdanovitch, who lost one division. Bonaparte now threw all his troops upon Würmsers. Masséna's victorious soldiers were brought up on Augereau's left and Sérurier's troops were to fall on Würmsers' flank. On August 5, the three French divisions, totaling 30,000 men, attacked Würmsers' 24,000 unsuspecting Austrians at Castiglione. The Austrians lost 20 cannons, 120 caissons, 1,000 prisoners and 2,000 killed and wounded. The survivors escaped only because the French were completely exhausted after three days of continuous fighting.

Once again, Mantua was besieged by 10,000 Frenchmen, while 3,000 men under General Kilmaine guarded Verona. The main French army of 33,000 men, led by Augereau, Masséna and Charles Henri comte de Belgrade Vaubois, pursued Würmsers.

Würmsers gathered his 20,000 troops from Trieste and combined them with 25,000 men under General Paul von Davidovitch to defend Trent and the Tyrol. As the Army of Italy advanced up the Adige River, Vaubois and Masséna forced back 14,000 of Davidovitch's troops at Rovereto on September 4. Bonaparte then learned that Würmsers was on his way to relieve Mantua. On September 6, the advance into the Tyrol was canceled and the pursuit of Würmsers resumed.

The Battle of Bassano on September 8 saw Colonel Lannes' troops burst through the Austrian lines, then storm into town. Murat's cavalry pursued the fleeing enemy and took 4,000 prisoners, 35 guns, five colors and two pontoon trains. Remnants of Würmsers' beaten battalions fled toward Friuli. Others, including Würmsers himself, fought their way into Mantua on September 12. Those reinforcements raised the city garrison to 23,000 men but proved to be a mixed blessing because now there were more mouths to feed from rapidly dwindling food supplies.

Nevertheless, the French Army of Italy's situation remained difficult. Reinforcements were slow to arrive, and by October the French numbered 41,000 men. Of those, 9,000 under Kilmaine surrounded Mantua and 14,000 troops—including General Sérurier—were sick. Bonaparte stationed Vaubois' 10,000 men at Lavis to block the Lake Garda approaches. Masséna occupied Bassano and was in contact with Vaubois through the Brenta Valley. Bonaparte was with Augereau in reserve at Verona.

During that period of military inactivity, the French commander turned his attention to administrative matters and began the unification of Italy by establishing three new republics: the Cisalpine, centered on Milan; the Cispadene, combining Modena and Reggio; and the Transpadene, joining Bologna and Ferrara. Bonaparte eventually planned to unite those three states into a



While Bonaparte was taking Mantua, General Jean Lannes was engaging Papal forces. On February 4, 1797, Faenza fell to Lannes, with 500 Papal troops killed and 1,000 taken prisoner.

single North Italian Republic, but he faced hostility from various vested interests: the church, the nobility and the well-connected.

Those political problems were soon overshadowed when a new Austrian army of 46,000 men under *Feldzeugmeister* (General of Infantry) Josef Alvincy, *Freiherr de Berberek*, moved against the French. In November, 28,000 troops led by Alvincy marched toward Bassano, and 18,000 under Davidovitch attacked Trent.

Vaubois was ordered to attack Trent, but he informed his commander that Davidovitch's forces were far stronger than anticipated. Bonaparte ordered Vaubois to hold his ground while he drove Alvincy out of the Brenta Valley, after which he would fall upon Davidovitch's rear. Vaubois was routed by Davidovitch on November 4, however, and Trent and Rovereto also fell to the Austrians. Vaubois rallied his fleeing men at Rivoli.

Meanwhile, Masséna gave ground to the advancing Alvincy, who captured Bassano, Fontanove and Vicenza. Masséna was ordered to fall back to the central position of Verona with Augereau. Joubert was ordered to reinforce Vaubois' shaken troops at Rivoli, who now numbered 13,000. Bonaparte personally visited Vaubois and issued the following rebuke: "Soldiers! I am not satisfied with you; you have shown neither discipline, nor constancy, nor bravery; in no position could you be rallied; you abandoned yourselves to a panicky terror; you have allowed yourselves to be driven from positions where a handful of brave men should stop an army. Soldiers of the 39th and of the 85th, you are not French soldiers; General, Chief of Staff, cause to be written on the flags—They are no longer of the Army of Italy!" The criticism hit home and Vaubois' chastened soldiers vowed to conquer or die.

During the next few days, Davidovitch did not move, but Alvincy moved quickly on to Verona. Soon, 8,000 Austrians occupied Caldiero and Colognola. Bonaparte ordered Augereau to attack the right and Masséna the left on November 12. After a bitter fight, they carried Caldiero and Colognola, but Alvincy soon arrived with his main force and recaptured both villages. The Austrians took two cannons and 750 prisoners, and the French lost a total of 2,000 men. Bonaparte retired to Verona, having tasted his first defeat in the Italian campaign.

Faced with 50,000 men in his front and 23,000 men still at his rear in Mantua, a despairing Bonaparte wrote to the Directorate: "Perhaps the hour of the brave Augereau, of the intrepid Masséna,



On April 18, 1797, Bonaparte dictates terms to Austrian Graf Maximilian Merveldt during the Preliminaries of Leoben, leading to the Peace of Campo Formio on October 17.

of my own death is at hand. We are abandoned in the depths of Italy." Facing his own distress at the defeat, however, Bonaparte encouraged his troops by proclaiming: "We have but one more effort to make and Italy is our own. The enemy is, no doubt, more numerous than we are, but half his troops are recruits; if we beat him, Mantua must fall, and we shall remain masters of everything."

Once again, Bonaparte intended to attempt an attack on the enemy's rear like those he had successfully conducted against Beaulieu at Lodi and Würmsier at Bassano. All available troops were rushed from Verona to seize Villanuova and with it Alvinzky's field park and lines of communication.

Leaving General Macquart with Vaubois' 3,000 men to defend Verona, Bonaparte set off on the night of November 14 to Ronco with 18,000 men. The morning of November 15 found a pontoon bridge built over the Adige River by French Chief Engineer Antoine-François comte Andréossy. Augereau was first to cross on his way to Arcola, while Masséna followed and moved left to successfully take Porcile against Provera's Austrian advance guard. The great difficulty of the day arose when Augereau was faced at the Arcola bridge by two battalions of Croatian infantry, who had several guns well-situated to sweep the roadway. That check was destroying Bonaparte's timetable, and he was fast losing the element of surprise. Desperate, the commander in chief seized the colors and with banner flying led Augereau's men forward. In the fire and confusion, the young general fell into a canal, and only the devotion of his aides-de-camp saved him from the bayonets of an Austrian counterattack. French General Jean Joseph Guieu's troops finally captured Arcola at 7 p.m.—six hours too late. Alvinzky retreated from Verona to Villanuova. The opportunity to capture him had passed. The distressing news that Vaubois had been driven back to Bussolengo compelled Bonaparte to give up Arcola.

The next morning, lacking any news of Davidovitch's further movement, Bonaparte renewed the attack on Arcola. The Austrians had reoccupied Porcile and Arcola, but soon the French recaptured Porcile. On November 17, the French unleashed all their fury against Alvinzky's army, which was in two unconnected parts. Masséna took Ronco, then lured the Austrian garrison out of Arcola and fell on it in an ambush, inflicting heavy casualties. Augereau pushed aside the other Austrian wing and joined Masséna's victorious division. With his rear positions threatened, and having suffered 7,000 casualties in three days, Alvinzky retired to Vincenza. Bonaparte now turned his army toward Davidovitch. Seeing his peril, Davidovitch just escaped Augereau at Dolce on November 21, leaving behind 1,500 prisoners, nine cannons, two

bridging trains and his baggage. So ended the third Austrian counteroffensive. Again, Bonaparte had masterfully used the strength of interior lines to engage in a vigorous offensive against divided exterior operating forces.

The French Directoire began negotiations with the Austrian emperor, but once the issue of sending provisions to Mantua was mentioned, those talks went no further. Meanwhile, the Army of Italy received more reinforcements and could put 34,500 men into the field in addition to the 10,000 men besieging Mantua. Communication between the various detachments was improved by use of courier posts and cannon shots. The disposition of the French units had Joubert between La Corona and Rivoli on

the east side of Lake Garda, Masséna at Verona, Augereau south of Ronco on the lower end of the Adige River and General Louis Emmanuel Rey on the eastern shore of Lake Garda. Sérurier returned to relieve the ailing Kilmaine at Mantua. Vaubois was relegated to the minor command of Leghorn.

On the Austrian side, Alvinzky had been reinforced in Bassano and now had 45,000 men. He launched diversionary attacks on Augereau on January 8, 1797, pushing him back on Legnano and clashing with Masséna at Verona. Still, the Lake Garda sector remained suspiciously quiet. Bonaparte waited for news until Joubert reported that Alvinzky was advancing with 28,000 men to crush him in the Adige Valley. Leaving 3,000 men to garrison Verona, Bonaparte and the entire French army hurried north to Rivoli. As in the beginning of the campaign, the Italian terrain provided several good roads for the French to travel north, but the Austrians traveling south found only two roads on which to move troops and artillery, making maneuvering very difficult.

The Battle of Rivoli (see the December 1996 *Military History*) began at daylight on January 14 when Joubert advanced northward, only to be checked by the Austrians, who then began to outflank his left. Quasdanovitch was also threatening to seize the important Osteria Gorge, while General François-Joseph, Marquis de Lusignan's column closed in on Bonaparte's rear from the south.

Joubert, however, managed to drive the Austrians from the Rivoli heights, and Bonaparte's troops also secured the southern sector. Bonaparte then directed Joubert's realigned brigades to clear Quasdanovitch's troops from the Osteria Gorge. As the Austrians reeled back, the entire French army turned north, splitting the Austrian force in two. Reinforcements arrived under General Rey, and those soldiers, together with Masséna's reserve brigade, captured 3,000 of Lusignan's Austrians in the south.

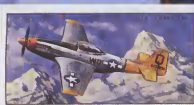
The battle was almost won when Bonaparte turned it over to Joubert in the evening as he and Masséna hurried farther south to prevent Austrian General Provera's 9,000 men from breaking through to Mantua. Sérurier's troops blocked Provera, and although Würmsier attempted to break out on January 16, Provera found himself with Bonaparte and Masséna in his rear, and was forced to capitulate. The fall of Mantua was complete on February 2, 1797, when the 30,000-man garrison—of which only 16,000 troops were able to march out—surrendered.

In five days of fighting, January 14–19, Bonaparte had reduced Alvinzky's and Provera's forces from 48,000 fighting men to 13,000 fugitives. The young French general had achieved his great objec-

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THE SIEGE OF CALCUTTA

The defenders of Fort William faced overwhelming numerical odds—
compounded by the ineptitude of their commanders.

By Michael Bedford and Bruce Dettman

The governing council of the British East India Company in Calcutta ought to have recognized the signs of impending disaster early in April 1756. If they had, and had then taken the steps necessary to prevent it, the events that led inexorably to the infamous night of the Black Hole might easily have been avoided. Not only did the warning signs go unrecognized, but it also seemed that throughout the weeks leading up to the siege of Calcutta those same officials—through gross incompetence—unwittingly conspired to bring about the disaster.

On April 16, Ali-virdi Khan, the 81-year-old nawab subahdar (imperial viceroy) of Bengal, died of a most unusual affliction

among Indian rulers of that period—natural causes. His 27-year-old grandson, Siraj-ud-Daula, succeeded him to the throne of the former province of the once mighty Mogul Empire of India. Bengal was still officially appended to India, though in every other respect it was an independent state.

The contrast between the old nawab and the new one could hardly have been more pronounced, not only in age but also in temperament. While wise old Ali-virdi Khan had exhibited the sober, practical attitude of a born statesman throughout his 15-year reign, young Siraj-ud-Daula was wilful and impetuous, naturally mistrustful of everyone around him, and easily angered. Nowhere



was that contrast more evident than in Siraj-ud-Daula's dealings with the British, who had occupied a tenuous but highly profitable foothold in Bengal for more than half a century.

The East India Company had established its first permanent trading post (or "factory") there in 1690 on the west bank of the Hooghly River, near the village of Kalikata. Six years later, its settlers began to construct Fort William, and during the next 60 years the city they had spawned—renamed Calcutta—continued to grow as company traders prospered on the massive volume of goods that flowed from the interior of India down the Ganges River.

Ali-vindi Khan's policy toward the British as well as other Europeans, notably the French at Chandernagore and the Dutch at Chinsurah, had been one of guarded toleration. He allowed them to carry on their trade but hedged them with restrictions and taxed their profits with often-heavy extortions. As long as they helped fill his own treasury coffers and remained peaceful, however, he suffered their presence.

Such was not the attitude of his successor. Of all the *fringhies* ("white devils") Siraj-ud-Daula especially distrusted the British. He cast covetous eyes at the vast treasure he believed they hoarded in Calcutta, and from the moment he became nawab he began searching for a pretext to drive the British from his lands. Obliging, they provided him with two.

The first centered around Kissendass, the son of a high-ranking Bengali official, Raj Ballabh, who had incurred Siraj-ud-Daula's displeasure.

When he was released after a brief imprisonment, Ballabh had arranged for the British to allow Kissendass to enter Calcutta along with the son's pregnant wife and family fortune, while Ballabh joined forces with those who opposed Siraj-ud-Daula's succession. The fact that the Calcutta officials continued to harbor Kissendass after Siraj-ud-Daula had become nawab—and had spurned his demand that they surrender the young man and his fortune to him—nurtured the young ruler's conviction that the British were actively plotting with his enemies at court.

The second incident concerned the construction of new fortifications by both the British and the French at their Bengali strongholds. Both nations had long been battling for dominance along the southeast coast of India, known as the Carnatic. So far, they had kept the peace in Bengal, their rivalries confined to the marketplace. But with war, though as yet undeclared, being waged between the two nations in Europe, officials at Calcutta and Chandernagore decided their long-

neglected defenses needed to be strengthened in case hostilities erupted in Bengal. When the newly enthroned nawab got wind of the new fortifications, he immediately ordered them to halt their work and raise any new construction, promising to protect both foreign enclaves from attack as his grandfather had before him. The French, realizing just how tenuous their position in Bengal really was, meekly replied that they were not building new fortifications, merely repairing their existing structures.

The British reacted differently. Roger Drake, the impetuous 34-year-old acting governor general of Calcutta, tactlessly stated that they were only preparing for their own protection—strongly implying that the nawab would be powerless to provide it.

Added to his fears that the British were preparing for the arrival of a large force from Madras to invade Bengal (fears the French nurtured by spreading similar rumors), Drake's rebuff was the final insult for Siraj-ud-Daula. By the end of May, a huge army, some 50,000 strong, had been assembled under the command of Rai Durlabh. The nawab sent a letter to Governor Drake. It was nothing less than a declaration of war.

The first disaster to befall the British came quickly. On June 3, the nawab's forces surrounded the ill-prepared East India Company fort at Cossimbazar, whose garrison numbered only 50 men. Two days later, the garrison surrendered; the only shot fired was by the garrison commander, who committed suicide rather than submit. William Watts, the factory's chief and the highest-ranking company official in the province next to Drake, was taken captive. Siraj-ud-Daula's army, after confiscating the British guns and ammunition, began marching on Calcutta.

When news of the disaster finally reached Fort William, the fog of complacency there was replaced by panic and indecision. True, there were capable and levelheaded Englishmen on the scene—such as John Zephaniah Holwell, a 45-year-old former surgeon, now zamindar (chief magistrate) of Calcutta—but they ranked low in the company's hierarchy, and their sound advice was largely ignored.

Acting Governor Drake combined a disastrous incapacity for planning and decision making with a degree of personal arrogance that had already alienated most of his fellow countrymen. Perhaps his most significant failing was in choosing Charles Manningham and William Frankland, both junior members of the council, to direct Fort William's defense. The military garrison was commanded by Captain-Commandant George Minchin, whose ineptitude may even have surpassed Drake's. (It is perhaps significant that Minchin and Drake held each other in utter contempt.) In fact, all of the senior officers of Minchin's staff, while competent enough in the peaceful pursuits of the company's day-to-day business ventures, were totally unprepared for war.

After learning of the loss of Cossimbazar, Drake and the council sent desperate pleas for help to the French and Dutch settlements. Not surprisingly, neither of them was willing to join the British in their predicament. The British also implored the authorities in Madras to send reinforcements—but the issue had been decided before their letters could be answered.

Drake attempted to appease the nawab's anger by promising to submit to all his demands, but it was too late. Siraj-ud-Daula was out for blood—especially Drake's.

Only then did the council members begin to examine the state of Fort William—and found that the fort had been neglected for so long that it was falling apart. Built roughly in the shape of a rectangle against the east bank of the Hooghly River, the fort's short sides faced north and south, and its long east wall stretched more than 700 feet and overlooked the center of Calcutta. Four corner bastions were intended to mount 10 cannons each. On the west side, facing the river and its mass of shipping, a line of cannons ran the length of the fort to protect against possible French attack from the river—the only direction from which the British considered an assault likely.

But the walls, 18 feet tall and 4 feet thick, were crumbling in many places. All along the east wall large openings had been excavated during the long years of peace to admit air and light. The



Calcutta, seen from Fort William in May 1793, 36 years after the British East India Company had retaken the city from its Bengali captors and rebuilt its ravaged residences. (The Mansell Collection Ltd.).



wooden platforms of the bastions were so rotten that they could support far fewer cannons than intended, and most of the cannons proved unusable in any case. All the south wall warehouses, or godowns, had been erected outside the fort, which precluded any flanking fire from the two south bastions.

Facing the fort on every side other than the river were the tall, grand houses built by prosperous English merchants and company functionaries over the years, the nearest of them no more than 40 yards away. Many of the houses towered above Fort William's own walls. And towering above it all was St. Anne's Church, the proud bastion of the Church of England. Its roof commanded the whole of the fort's north and east ramparts.

The East India Company's chief engineer, John O'Hara, advised the council to demolish the buildings surrounding the fort so the defenders could have a clear shot at an enemy attacking from any direction. All of the council members and chief military officers owned houses that would have to be leveled; predictably, therefore, the council ignored O'Hara's suggestion. They decided instead to draw up a defensive line that encompassed nearly the whole of "White Town," the British enclave that huddled about Fort William, leaving the sprawling expanse of native dwellings and marketplaces known as "Black Town"—home to well over 100,000 Indians—to the mercy of the attacking army. Batteries would be emplaced across the three main thoroughfares leading to the fort from north, east and south. The smaller streets would be blocked by palisades.

For the plan to be successful, the long defensive line would have to be adequately manned. Yet when the garrison was mustered, everyone—including Captain-Commandant Minchin—was surprised to find that there were only 180 men fit for duty. Of those, only 45 were Europeans; the rest were Portuguese and Armenian half-castes, whose fighting capabilities were deemed questionable. A militia was hastily formed from the ranks of the young Company apprentices (known as "writers"), the crews of the many vessels that still crowded the harbor, and the Armenian and Portuguese population. Manningham and Frankland, whom Drake had made colonel and lieutenant colonel, respectively, were appointed to command of the militia. With their new ranks, they officially outranked the commander of the garrison, who was only a captain. The militia added another 300 men to the defense of Calcutta, for a total of 515 troops to hold off 50,000 Indians.

Defensive preparations were finally begun, but they were seriously hampered by the steady disappearance of native manpower, as their lascars fled along with most of Black Town's population as news of the nawab's approach spread.

About that time, a bizarre incident occurred that had significant ramifications during the crisis. On June 11, Drake ordered the arrest of the powerful merchant Omichand, the only Hindu wealthy enough to own one of the grand houses in the otherwise exclusively European White Town. Omichand had recently lost the prestigious position of chief investing and purchasing agent for the company in its transactions with the Bengalis. Suspicion quickly grew that, to gain revenge for this considerable slight, Omichand had secretly urged Siraj-ud-Daula to attack the English, and that suspicion was seemingly confirmed when two letters from the nawab's camp addressed to Omichand were discovered.

Omichand's house guest, the same Kissendass whose stay in Calcutta had helped to fuel Siraj-ud-Daula's ire, was also arrested. He had been preparing to leave Calcutta, but the British decided to keep him near, in case the nawab demanded that they give him up. Even then, the British were hoping for a negotiated settlement. Omichand and Kissendass were incarcerated in a small jail near Fort William's southeast bastion, in a room that was used to house drunken and disorderly sailors. Ill-lit by two small, barred slits for windows that provided little light, foul smelling and overhike, the 14-by-18-foot room had already earned an appropriate nickname among the garrison's troops. They called it the "Black Hole."

On June 13, the advance guard of the nawab's army was within 15 miles of Calcutta, a day's march away. All English women and



Top: Siraj-ud-Daula, the nawab of Bengal whose general distrust of firanghies ("white devils") applied most tellingly to the British. **Above:** John Zephaniah Holwell organized the last stand at Fort William and later survived incarceration in the Black Hole.

children were ordered to take refuge in the fort, and the outer batteries and palisades were rushed to completion.

By June 15 the defenders of Calcutta were as ready as they would ever be. The siege started on a dramatic note the next morning. Apparently unaware that a defensive moat around the city, called the Maratha Ditch, had never been completed and that there were numerous undefended crossing points, General Rai Durlabh chose to attack the fort's strongest point, directly north of Calcutta where the ditch met the Hooghly. That position was guarded by a small defensive enclosure called Perrin's Redoubt, the only substantial new fortification that had been built. (This was the same fortification to which the nawab had taken such exception in the previous weeks.) The redoubt was manned by a force of 25 men with seven cannons, under the command of 24-year-old Francis Piccard. Supported from the river by the guns of the company ship *Prince George*, captained by Thomas Hague, and by a detachment led by a Lieutenant Blagg positioned in the Bagh Bazar, or "Great Market," Piccard and his men were able to inflict heavy casualties—some 800 out of a force of 4,000—and rout the attackers. The defenders lost five at the redoubt and four on *Prince George*.

There was no attack on the 17th, and it was spent by most of the fort's defenders in self-congratulatory revelry. On that day, Siraj-ud-Daula reached Calcutta with the main body of his forces. While setting up camp, the nawab was notified (according to some accounts, by a servant of Omichand) that the Maratha Ditch had been left uncompleted to the southeast. He was told that farther north there was a crossing over it, wide enough for his army's war elephants and artillery, that led directly to the Avenue, White Town's main thoroughfare, and thence directly to Fort William. Siraj-ud-Daula ordered attacks on those positions for the next day, June 18.

On the night of the 17th, the nawab unleashed his professional plunderers on the Bagh Bazar, which had been left undefended when Blagg's detachment was ordered back to the fort. After looting the area, they set fire to it. The flames quickly spread through Black Town and joined with the fires set by the British to clear away the native hovels around their defensive perimeter. A flood of refugees poured into Fort William, consisting mostly of the families of the Armenian and Portuguese militia, who refused to continue fighting unless the refugees were allowed inside. Soon the wide parade grounds in front of the governor's mansion were filled with more than 2,000 women, children and other dependents.

Still, the attack on the east battery the next morning began well for the British. Lieutenant Melchio LeBeaume, a Frenchman in

the East India Company service who had deserted his countrymen at Chandernagore (as had the commander of the nawab's artillery, the Marquis St. Jacques), occupied the city jail 500 yards east of the battery with 57 men and two cannons. That hazardous forward position had been established to prevent Siraj-ud-Daula's army from occupying the houses that stretched south of the Avenue along Rope Walk. From 9 a.m. until 3 p.m., LeBeaume, reinforced by 20 men, staunchly held his position, but lost half of his troops.

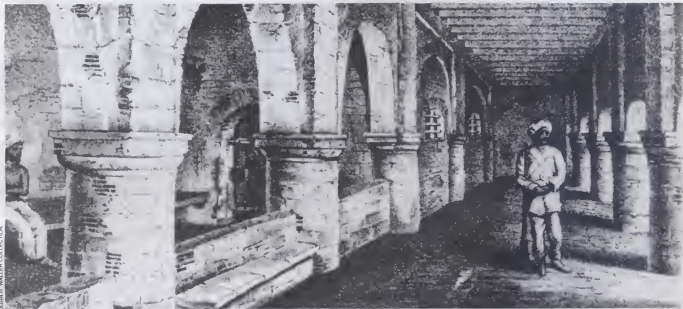
Despite the heroic defense, Indian troops gradually began to seize those strategic houses that commanded British defensive positions. House-to-house fighting ensued. The fiercest occurred at the home of Captain-Commandant Minchin, which occupied a critical location at the southeast corner of the defensive perimeter. For hours, Lieutenant Blagg and 10 men held off a savage attack. Finally running out of ammunition, they fought their way out of the burning building at swordpoint with the loss of only two men.

Soon Siraj-ud-Daula's forces were in almost sole possession of the buildings surrounding the fort. By 5 p.m., the east battery had been abandoned and the other batteries, neither of which had fired a shot, soon followed. A shrunken defensive line was established just outside the fort's walls, stretching from the Crutenden residence on the north side, to St. Anne's Church and Edward Eyre's residence on the east side, and south to the Company House.

That night, English women and children were evacuated down the river to the company ships. Managing that undertaking were Drake's favorites, Manningham and Frankland. In the rush and confusion several women were left behind, and Manningham refused to allow Mary Carey, the half-caste wife of an English sailor serving in the militia, to board.

As soon as they had escorted their charges onto the decks of the waiting ship *Dodgley* (which they co-owned with Drake), both officers decided to stay on board, arguing that the women and children needed their personal protection, and they ordered Andrew Young, the ship's master, to move off down the river. As news of this desertion reached the defenders, already exhausted and suffering from a lack of food and drink, a near mutiny broke out. The company's living quarters and warehouses in the fort were ransacked for liquor, particularly arrack, the potent native drink.

Shortly after midnight on the 19th, the Indians, in a surprising departure from their established pattern of fighting only between dawn and dusk, assaulted the south wall. Because of the warehouses built along that wall, the gunners on the bastions were unable to bring their cannons to bear. But the attack was halfhearted and



The bars of the jail outside of Fort William's southeast bastion are visible from the veranda. Normally used to house drunken and disorderly sailors, the 14-by-18-foot room was ill-lit and poorly ventilated, earning it the nickname "Black Hole" from the garrison troops.



the Indians were beaten off by the defenders, using hand grenades. Before dawn, an emergency war council was held, and it was revealed that there remained only a two-day supply of gunpowder—and a good part of that was damp and useless.

Even the most thickheaded and uncomprehending of those present finally realized that a complete evacuation could no longer be postponed, and it was set for that evening. In the meantime, the growing number of wounded—among them the gallant LeBeaume—would be taken off to the ships. An argument that might have been raised over this decision was silenced when a cannonball burst into the council chamber. Though no one was killed, it brought an abrupt end to their deliberations.

At daybreak on June 19, the outposts came under heavy attack. Piccard, who had been wounded, and his men who had been holding the Company House were forced to withdraw to the fort. At last, the entire garrison was fighting from the walls of Fort William, just as chief engineer O'Hara had advocated before the attack. But the tall buildings rising above the fort's walls blocked the defenders' field of fire while providing ready-made shooting platforms for the nawab's troops.

Then disaster struck again. An urgent message was sent to Drake, who, after a search, was finally discovered taking a nap in one of the storerooms underneath the fort. The message informed Drake that, contrary to his own earlier estimation, there was no more dry powder except what had already been issued. That announcement was overheard, and the word quickly spread throughout the fort, triggering a panic-stricken rush to the riverside and the remaining boats. In the confusion, many of the remaining inhabitants drowned. Captain-Commandant Minchin and O'Hara, the engineer, were among those who deserted. Governor Drake followed soon afterward. Drake's flight to the safety of *Dodalay* was accompanied by a fusillade from the shore—fired not by the enemy but by his own troops, who had watched the whole incredible scene. Altogether some 56 Englishmen were among those who deserted that morning.

The Englishmen remaining at Fort William, finding themselves so treacherously served by their former leaders, held an emergency council to choose a new leader, John Z. Holwell. Holwell was by no means a popular figure among the British—indeed, he was

heartily disliked by some—but he had a good understanding of the Indian mentality because of his dealings with them as zamindar, and he had proved his bravery under fire at the east battery.

In an attempt to raise the morale of his woebegone troops, Holwell ordered three chests of the company's treasure to be shared out among them. Then he dispatched the company's chief accountant, Paul Pearkes, and a couple of sailors to *Prince George*, which still stood off Perrin's Redoubt, to request that her captain

THE BLACK HOLE:

Nearly 235 years have passed since the night of the "Black Hole of Calcutta," but heated controversy still rages. On one side are those who accept without reservation that 146 individuals were somehow packed into a small room that June night in India and that 123 of them died as a result of this imprisonment. Then there are those who accept none of it, insisting that the whole story is a myth, concocted to justify British conquest.

What the controversy really boils down to is simply whether one believes John Holwell's book *A Genuine Narrative of the Deplorable Deaths of the English Gentlemen and Others Who Were Suffocated in the Black Hole*, since it is virtually the only eyewitness account of the events. True, John Cooke, another survivor, gave evidence, but he did so in 1772, 16 years after the incident. Another account by a Captain Mills, who was supposed to have lived through the night in the Black Hole, is today generally discredited, since he is believed to have escaped from Fort William just after its surrender.

What then of Holwell's narrative? Certainly it makes for stirring reading. But is what he wrote necessarily the truth? Many latter-day historians have wondered. J.H. Little, in two articles published in *Bengal Past and Present*, was especially doubtful. He asserted that Holwell concocted the entire story, and that everyone else who vouched for its accuracy was involved in what amounted to a conspiracy of lies. Those who Holwell claimed died in the Black Hole, Little wrote, actually perished during the final

Fort William in 1756. Neglected and vulnerable to musket fire from surrounding houses, the fort's defense was further undermined by abominable leadership.



bring his ship down river and evacuate the garrison after dark.

Holwell saw to it that the men were fed a cooked meal and ordered that liquor be issued to them. Then he rearranged the remnants of gunpowder, assigning most of it to the cannons of the corner bastions.

The Indians made their first determined attempt to storm the walls on that day, the 19th, an assault that was successfully repulsed around 3 p.m. Then misfortune again befell the defenders. Prince George ran aground on one of the shifting sandbars that made navigating the Hooghly treacherous even at the best of times. After a desperate attempt to float her off by using his anchor, Prince George's captain sent a message

to Dotalary, cowering downstream, requesting the loan of another anchor and cable to help work his ship off the bar. Captain Young refused, replying that his own vessel, with its burden of refugees, might be endangered. So Prince George remained aground, where she was plundered and—after the captain and the crew members still on board had been taken captive—burned to the waterline.

In the fort, discipline now broke down completely. Holwell could do nothing to prevent the looting, drunkenness and fight-

ing over the many Hindu and half-caste women who still crowded the fort. During that night, some 56 Dutch mercenaries deserted and offered their services to the nawab's officers.

The morning of the 20th dawned with renewed fighting that, as usual, eventually died down with the coming of the severe afternoon heat. Holwell then called for another meeting of his remaining officers and men and urged them to fight on while he commenced negotiations with the nawab. He approached Omichand, who was still languishing in prison, and proposed that he act once more as intermediary.

Omichand agreed, and a truce was arranged around 3:00 that afternoon. It was broken hardly an hour later, however, when a mass of Indian troops came from behind the buildings around the fort and crowded under the east wall. While all attention was directed there, a Dutch sergeant named Hedleburgh, apparently in league with the deserters, forced open the river gate, and the nawab's soldiers swarmed in. A small detachment of defenders, including Blagg and Piccard, met them but were quickly butchered.

By then, the Indians were streaming unopposed into Fort William. The nawab's banner was hoisted above the southwest bastion. Resistance ceased, and the defenders dropped their weapons. The only alternative was being hacked to death by the nawab's forces. Curiously enough, the victorious troops were so intent on plundering the fort's riches that they paid almost no attention to their prisoners, several of whom managed to escape.

At last, the nawab made his triumphal entry into Fort William. At an impromptu audience, he received both Kissendass and Omichand and bestowed upon them royal forgiveness and favor—seemingly validating suspicions that both were his willing pawns. Afterward, Holwell was ushered into his presence. Siraj-ud-Daula voiced his displeasure that these few men had stayed behind and met his army when they ought to have fled along with the governor. He also complained about the few treasures his men had discovered in the fort. Holwell was dismissed after receiving the nawab's promise that the prisoners would be well treated. He and the rest of the captives were then gathered together under the verandah along the fort's east wall. They watched as the governor's mansion and the company's factory buildings, having been thoroughly looted, went up in flames.

SEPARATING MYTH FROM FACT

attack on Fort William on the afternoon of June 20. That point of view, though admittedly extreme, is not unjustified. According to Holwell, among those who died in the Black Hole were four men—Blagg, Piccard, Baillie and Lieutenant Bishop—who are known to have actually been killed during the final moments of the battle for the fort. Little went on to suggest that perhaps as few as nine men were truly incarcerated that June night in the Black Hole of Calcutta. Most British historians have rejected such radical assertions, however, and have insisted that Holwell's evidence is essentially correct and truthful.

The debate continues briskly even today. The opposing views are well represented in two books on the subject: Noel Barber's *The Black Hole of Calcutta* (1965) and Iris MacFarlane's *The Black Hole: Or, the Makings of a Legend* (1975). In the former, Barber accepts the story without reservation: "I find it impossible that Holwell... would dare (as some suggest) to invent an episode that never took place...." In the latter, MacFarlane sarcastically refutes all aspects of the story. MacFarlane claims no more than 20 Englishmen went into the Black Hole that night, and of them only three men died.

Another author, B.K. Gupta in *Sirajuddaulah and the East India Company* (1966), explored the subject in an altogether different light. First he established the approximate number of Europeans—excluding the half-caste Portuguese and Armenians and the militiamen who were allowed to leave immediately after Fort William

was taken. Then, by a process of elimination, he attempted to discover just how many people were actually incarcerated and how many died.

According to his calculations, there were altogether between 230 and 255 Europeans bearing arms at the beginning of the siege. Of those, 159 escaped alive, including the 21 who are known to have survived the Black Hole. Fifty-three died in battle between June 16 and 20. That means between 18 and 43 victims perished in the Black Hole, out of a total of between 39 and 64 who were incarcerated there.

If those figures are anywhere near the truth (and it seems very likely that they are), then a very different picture emerges from the one painted so melodramatically by Holwell. Given the conditions, it must still have been a wretched experience for the prisoners, and many did not survive. But no longer is the Black Hole of Calcutta an epic of human suffering and inhuman cruelty; rather, it has been reduced to the status of a minor historical postscript that has been wildly exaggerated in the telling and retelling.

There is one last casualty in the saga of the Black Hole that must be mentioned—Mary Carey, the devoted wife who survived that night while her husband perished. In none of the contemporary accounts is she mentioned, not even in Holwell's two letters written on July 17 and August 3 of 1756. Not until the following year when he wrote and published his full-blown version did he add Mary to the list of sufferers.

M.B. & B.D.



An engraving by W. Bromley depicts the hellishly overcrowded conditions of the Black Hole as represented—and possibly exaggerated—in British history books.

Any hopes the English prisoners had for decent treatment were soon rudely shattered. A few Europeans—perhaps the Dutch deserters—were involved in a drunken brawl with the nawab's troops. A shot was fired, and a native soldier was killed. Consequently, it was deemed unwise to allow the European prisoners to remain at such liberty. Informed of the situation, Siraj-ud-Daula inquired whether the fort had a jail where the prisoners could be incarcerated. He was told it did—the Black Hole. And so the nawab, not realizing how small and stifling the Black Hole was, ordered the prisoners confined there for the duration of the evening and quickly went to bed, sleeping through what quickly became one of history's most notorious—and controversial—horror stories.

The prisoners, some 145 men and one woman, Mary Carey (whose husband Peter was also a captive), were herded by the guards into the 14-by-18-foot jail at 8 p.m. Two narrow, iron-barred windows opened into the verandah, and a wooden sleeping platform ran along the back wall.

When the last man was crammed and squeezed inside, the door was slammed shut. The temperature inside the room on that sweltering night was over 100 degrees, with very high humidity. Only those pushed next to the windows (including Holwell) could hope to catch the faintest whiff of fresh air. The stench of so many sweaty bodies packed so closely together was poisonous. They remained

there until 6 o'clock the next morning, the 21st, gasping, shoving, and trampling one another.

When the door was forced open (it opened inward, and the survivors had to move the dead bodies blocking it), only 22 men (one of whom died soon after), and Mary Carey emerged alive. The rest had suffocated. Among the living were Holwell; John Cooke, the company secretary; and Henry Lushington, an 18-year-old apprentice. Mrs. Carey was now a widow.

Upon learning what had happened in the Black Hole, Siraj-ud-Daula hastily released all the prisoners except for Holwell and three other senior officers. The freed captives made their way to Falta, 30 miles down the Hooghly, where Drake had stopped to regroup. Holwell underwent some brutal interrogation in regard to treasure rumored to still lie hidden in Calcutta and was even threatened with being tied to the muzzle of a cannon. When it became clear that Holwell knew of no such treasure, however, Siraj-ud-Daula suddenly declared, "His sufferings have been great, let him be free"—and released all four officers. Incredibly, among the English deserters who ought to have been punished, only Minchin was singled out for censure and dismissal. The rest—including Drake, Manningham and Frankland—had only their consciences to answer to.

Thus, the siege of Calcutta ended in a resounding triumph over the hated *fringhies* for Siraj-ud-Daula. It was, however, a hard-earned victory—some 7,000 Indian troops had perished in fighting. The nawab would have little time to savor his conquest. A force of some 2,000 troops under the command of Colonel Robert Clive sailed from Madras on October 16, 1756, with a Royal Navy squadron to retake Calcutta (which the nawab had renamed Alinagar), and Clive succeeded on January 2. Despite orders to the contrary, the bold and opportunistic Clive did not stop there. He defeated the French and captured Chandernagore in March; then on June 23 (scarcely a year after the fall of Calcutta), he met and defeated the nawab's army at Plassey. During the battle, Rai Durlabh and an uncle of Siraj-ud-Daula's named Mir Jaffar, both of whom had been bribed by Clive, betrayed their master and kept their forces out of combat. Siraj-ud-Daula, his tempestuous reign having lasted only 15 months, was caught and hacked to pieces at his former capital Murshidabad. In his place, Clive installed Mir Jaffar as a meekly subservient puppet.

A final irony befell one of the principal figures of the siege of Calcutta, the double-dealing Omichand. Once again, he acted as a go-between, this time in the intrigues between Clive and Mir Jaffar that preceded the battle at Plassey. At a critical juncture, Omichand threatened to betray the conspiracy to the nawab unless he was substantially rewarded. Furthermore, he demanded that his extortions be included in the treaty between the British and Mir Jaffar. It was duly included in one treaty, but Clive—in a moment of inspired treachery that no doubt would have delighted the rapacious merchant had it not been directed at him—ordered that two treaties be drawn up. The one including Omichand's demands was a fake, while the other, giving him nothing, was genuine. Omichand took the bait and remained silent. According to some accounts, when the master betrayer at last discovered himself betrayed, he went insane and died the following year. □

Bruce Dettman is a San Francisco-based writer, and Michael Bedford is a California historian whose specialties include Chinese and British history. Further reading: *The Black Hole of Calcutta*, by Noel Barber; or *Sirajuddaulah and the East India Company*, by B.K. Gupta.



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SPECIAL FEATURE

TITANS CLASH IN THE W



WILDERNESS



In the dark, forbidding woods of Virginia's Wilderness, Generals Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee stumbled blindly toward their first wartime encounter. Neither had a clear idea of his opponent's intentions, but each planned to do what he did best—attack.

By Roy Morris, Jr.

March 8, 1864, was a wet, blustery Tuesday in Washington, D.C. Despite the bad weather, an unusually large crowd had gathered at the White House that evening for one of President and Mrs. Lincoln's regular receptions. The reason for the increased turnout was not hard to guess: Major General Ulysses S. Grant was rumored to be in town for a high-level meeting with the president. At that meeting, Grant, the increasingly idolized victor of Fort Donelson, Vicksburg and Chattanooga, was expected to receive his much-anticipated promotion to lieutenant general—the first man to hold such an exalted rank in the United States Army since George Washington, nine decades earlier.

No one was more eager to meet the Illinois general than Abraham Lincoln. In the face of near-constant defeats on the eastern front of the war, Grant had been a consistent beacon of good news—and good generalship—in the West. While other, more dashing generals—George McClellan, John Pope, Ambrose Burnside and "Fighting Joe" Hooker—had been tried and found wanting on the Virginia battlefields, the initially unknown Grant had quietly gone about the task of carving up large sections of the western Confederacy. Rumors of occasional binge drinking by Grant had floated back to Lincoln, but the hard-pressed chief executive had shown a patience for his fellow Illinoisan that he had not always demonstrated with the closer-at-hand eastern generals. "I can't spare this man; he fights," was how Lincoln put it, joking that perhaps he should find out what brand of whiskey Grant drank and send a case to the rest of his generals to stiffen their resolve.

But Lincoln had not summoned Grant to discuss his alcoholic preferences. Nor was the general in Washington simply to receive his well-deserved raise in rank. What Lincoln wanted to hear from Grant was how, exactly, he intended to win the war, and, more to the point, how he intended to go through Robert E. Lee to do it. For, despite the dramatic Union victory at Gettysburg, Pa., on July 3, 1863, there was still the disheartening knowledge that the wily Confederate general had escaped to fight another day. And, given his past record, he could be expected to fight hard, to fight well, and to fight soon. In the eight months since Gettysburg, Lee and the tough veteran officers and men of his Army of Northern Virginia had frustrated one attempt after another by Maj. Gen. George

With Union forces smashing through his line on May 6, 1864, General Robert E. Lee takes position to personally lead the Texas Brigade, in Advance the Flag of Dixie, by Rick Reeves. The troops of the 5th Texas Infantry would only charge after Lee heeded their shouts of "Lee to the rear!" (Rick Reeves, Collector Historical Prints).



During his first visit to The Republican Court in the Days of Lincoln, Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant introduces his wife, Julia, to the president, in Peter J. Rothenmel's painting. On the following evening, Abraham Lincoln appointed Grant commander of the Union Army.

Gordon Meade's Army of the Potomac to finish them off. With the unusually wet winter coming to a close, Lee's rested and reconstituted army no doubt would be back grabbing at the Union's throat as soon as weather permitted.

As the crowd swirled and eddied around the president and his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, in the East Room of the White House, there was a sudden stir and buzz at the far end of the room, near the doorway. The president, who, at 6 feet 4 inches, was a good head taller than anyone else in the room, looked up from the receiving line and spied the unprepossessing form of the new arrival—a man whose face he had only seen in photographs. “Why, here is General Grant!” Lincoln exclaimed. With a master politician's quick grace, the president hurried across the room, right hand outstretched. Grant, 8 inches shorter than the president, walked slowly toward him (presidential secretary John Hay remembered later that it was “a long walk for a bashful man”), and the two men shook hands for the first time. “Well, this is a great pleasure, I assure you,” said Lincoln with a smile. Grant, who a fellow Union officer once said “habitually wears an expression as if he had determined to drive his head through a brick wall, and was about to do it,” relaxed enough to permit himself a slight smile. After a lengthy wade through well-wishers—Lincoln withdrew to permit the general his moment in the sun—the two men finally sat down together in private to discuss the upcoming campaign.

Lincoln did not want to know Grant's plan of attack in great detail; he had gotten into trouble in the past by accidentally leaking details of campaigns. It was enough to know that Grant intended to make his headquarters in the field with the Army of the Potomac, and, more important, that he intended to make Robert E. Lee his primary target. Grant later recalled: “My general plan...was to concentrate all the force possible against the Confederate armies in the field. To get possession of Lee's army was the first great object. With the capture of his army Richmond would necessarily follow.” He intended to attach himself directly to the Army of the Potomac, still commanded on paper by Meade, the victor at Gettysburg.

Together, they would attempt to bring Lee to battle as soon as possible. The only question was where.

Lee and his 65,000-man army were presently camped on the south side of the Rapidan River, directly across from Meade's forces at Culpeper. The two sides had spent a comparatively comfortable winter—particularly from the perspective of the Union troops, who passed the winter huddling in their snug tents and cabins, writing letters home, engaging in mock-heroic snowball fights, going to armywide revival meetings and enlarging upon that endlessly fascinating topic: What are our generals going to do next? George T. Stevens, a surgeon with the 77th New York Regiment, remembered: “This was the most cheerful winter we had passed in camp. One agreeable feature was the great number of ladies, wives of officers, who spent the winter with their husbands. On every fine day, great numbers of ladies might be seen riding about the camps and over the desolate fields, and their presence added greatly to the brilliancy of the frequent reviews.” The humble enlisted men, not having the pleasure of female company, manufactured their own companions. According to Captain Henry Blake of the 11th Massachusetts, the men hosted their own homespun dances, with “one half of the soldiers arrayed as women. The resemblance in the features of some of these persons was so perfect that a stranger would be unable to distinguish between the assumed and the genuine characters.”

The Confederates, who were not so well fed or sheltered as the Federals, occupied themselves mainly with trying to keep warm and finding enough to eat. Rations were mainly cornmeal and mush, leading one wag to nickname the two armies “the Fed and the Cornfed.” Still, despite the inferior level of comfort, the Southerners maintained a surprisingly high morale, due in large part to the reverence bordering on religious zeal that the men held for their commanding general. “No army ever had such a leader as General Lee,” gushed Private William Wilson of Virginia. “No general ever had such an army.” When Lee went to Gordonsville in late April to personally welcome back into the army Lt. Gen.

Right: Soldiers and supply wagons of the Army of the Potomac cross a pontoon bridge at Germanna Ford on the Rapidan River on May 4, 1864. **Below Right:** The bones and skulls of troops killed at Chancellorsville a year earlier greeted the Union troops as they entered the Wilderness. The bodies of many more soldiers would soon be added to the macabre cache.

James Longstreet and his I Corps, which had been on detached service in Tennessee (and had spearheaded the great albeit Pyrrhic Confederate victory at Chickamauga), he was mobbed by the soldiers who greeted him. "The men hung around him and seemed satisfied to lay their hands on his gray horse or to touch the bridle, or the stirrup, or the general's leg," recalled Private Frank Mixson of South Carolina. "Anything that Lee had was sacred to us fellows who had just come back." An officer observed, "We looked forward to victory under him as confidently as to successive sunrises."

Although the Confederates had overwhelming faith in Lee, their Federal counterparts were less sure of Grant, at least at first. The new commanding general of the Union Army arrived at Meade's headquarters at Brandy Station two days after his meeting with Lincoln, and immediately set out to make order of the chaotic scene. One unidentified private took note of his new commander's less than impressive physical appearance. "Of all the officers in the group," he said, "I should have selected almost anyone but him as the general who won Vicksburg. He was small and slim, even to undersize; very quiet, and with a slight stoop. But for his straps, which came down too far in front of his shoulders on his rusty uniform, I should have taken him for a clerk at headquarters rather than a general." Nor were the men much impressed by the bold talk coming from the general's entourage. They had heard such talk before, usually before a devastating defeat. Said Private Frank Wilkeson: "Old soldiers who had seen many military reputations melt before the battle fire of the Army of Northern Virginia shrugged their shoulders carelessly, and said indifferently, 'Well, let Grant try what he can accomplish with the Army of the Potomac. He cannot be worse than his predecessors; and, if he is a fighter, he can find all the fighting he wants. We have never complained that Lee's men would not fight.'" Other soldiers joked, without much humor, that the Union Army was about to embark on its "annual Bull Run flogging."

Grant's first order of business was to decide what to do with the often vineyard Meade. Initially, he had intended to replace the patrician Pennsylvanian with one of his own trusted subordinates from the west, a move that Lincoln would have endorsed wholeheartedly, having lost whatever fleeting confidence he had in Meade following the general's dilatory pursuit of Lee after Gettys-



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burg. But Grant's first meeting with Meade changed his mind. Meade humbly offered to step aside in favor of one of Grant's western warriors, adding that "the work before us [is] of such vast importance to the whole nation that the feelings or wishes of no person should stand in the way of selecting the right men for all positions." Perhaps Grant was disarmed by Meade's open display



Top: General Grant believed a movement through the Wilderness would simplify his logistics lifeline and screen Washington, D.C. (© 1911, Patriot Publishing Company). **Above:** Lieutenant General A.P. Hill paid a heavy price for ignoring Maj. Gen. Henry Heth's warning not to count on the swift arrival of Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's I Corps.

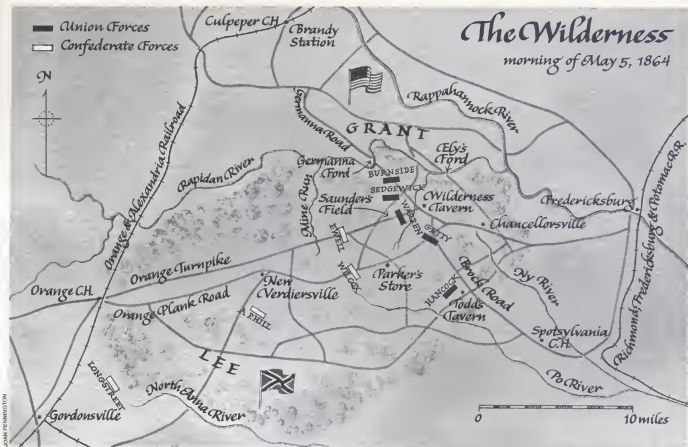
of patriotism. Or perhaps, having been in the same position himself following the Battle of Shiloh, he simply realized that by retaining Meade he would ensure his unquestioning loyalty and obedience. Whatever the reason, Grant elected to keep Meade in titular command of the Army of the Potomac, but he pitched his own headquarters tent nearby, and all messages, inquiries and orders went through him first, not the army's bootless commander.

With Meade firmly in hand, Grant set out to plan the upcoming offensive. Lee's army had spent the fall and winter months fortifying their lines south of the Rappahannock; they were now virtually impregnable, as Meade had discovered for himself during the abortive Mine Run campaign the previous autumn, when a well-planned attempt to surprise Lee had had to be called off when the soldiers got a firsthand look at the bristling Rebel breastworks. Grant, for his part, had no intention of attacking Lee behind his defenses. Instead, he intended to outflank him by marching rapidly southward through the forbidding landscape known as the Wilderness, a 70-mile-wide, 30-mile-long stretch of second-growth timber, wiry underbrush, brackish water and barren soil that was all too familiar to the Union soldiers from their disastrous defeat at Chancellorsville exactly one year earlier. Indian legend said the shadowy woods of the Wilderness were haunted, and no one who had survived the previous spring's debacle doubted the legends. Grant, the least superstitious of men, had no time for old wives' tales, but he did understand that unless he moved quickly through the Wilderness, he and his army were dangerously vulnerable to enemy attack. Should Lee strike while the army was stretched out along the twisting trails and marshy gullies, the results could prove as fatal to Grant's career as Chancellorsville had been to Hooker's. Speed was of the essence, and the Army of the Potomac was not particularly noted for its quickness.

The task of arranging the army's movements was left to Meade's chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Andrew Humphreys, a prewar engineer and topographer who was as well-suited for the thankless role as anyone could be. The Pennsylvania-born Humphreys was a profane, irascible soldier whose "blue-gray dauntless eyes threw into his stern face the coldness of hammered steel." He was seldom seen to smile, and the complexities of his new assignment left him little time for amusement. He was charged with organizing a 120,000-man army into a manageable and maneuverable body, with 4,300 supply wagons and 850 field ambulances tagging along behind it like the tail of a kite. All were expected to march undisturbed through some of the roughest countryside in Virginia, beneath the very noses of their ever-vigilant opponents, and to do so in less than 30 hours, which was the amount of time it had taken Lee to move his army into position to counterattack during the Mine Run campaign the previous November. Anything less would leave the Federals dangerously exposed in the midst of the Wilderness, facing a predictably unpredictable enemy, with little room for the army's cavalry and artillery to operate. "Viewed as a battleground," said Lt. Col. Francis Walker, the Wilderness "was simply infernal."

Despite the difficulties, Humphreys quickly devised a workable plan. The army would be divided into two wings, which would cross the Rappahannock at the Germanna and Ely roads and march quickly down the Germanna Plank Road to reunite at the intersection with the region's one really good road, the Orange Turnpike. Once there, the army would have the choice of several routes leading west. With room to maneuver, the army could force the Rebels to come out of their breastworks in order to block any Union thrust toward Richmond. On an open field, the weight of Northern numbers and the deadly efficiency of the Union gunners would inevitably swing the tide of battle toward the North. Confederate artillery officer Robert Stiles, anticipating the upcoming campaign, was not alone in feeling "a sort of premonition of the definite mathematical calculation, in whose hand, unyielding grip our future should be held and crushed."

It was a good plan, worthy of an experienced engineer's logical mind. The only problem was that the best engineer in the prewar army was now wearing gray—and he was wearing three stars



The morning of May 5, 1864, found the Union II Corps at Todd's Tavern and the V and VI corps moving down the Germanna Road. Meanwhile, the Confederate II Corps was marching up the Orange Turnpike as the III Corps moved up the Orange Plank Road.

wreathed in gold on his collar. Already, Robert E. Lee had summoned his ranking commanders to the top of Clark's Mountain, overlooking the suddenly busy Union camp, and unerringly predicted the path the enemy would take, down to the very fords they would use when moving against him. Surprisingly, Lee did not intend to contest the river crossings. He hoped instead to lure Grant into overconfidence (something experienced eastern officers had already seen on the part of Grant's staff, if not the commanding general himself), and then strike him at an as-yet-undetermined place along the way.

Inexplicably, Lee made no preliminary moves to get his own somewhat scattered forces underway, preferring to leave the respective corps of Lt. Gens. Richard Ewell and Ambrose Powell Hill in their winter camps at Clark's Mountain and Orange Court House, while Longstreet's newly returned I Corps remained in the rear around Gordonsville, ready to fall back quickly to defend Richmond should the need arise. Perhaps, like Grant, Lee was guilty of underestimating his new opponent. Both generals had always had the advantage of fighting against opponents inferior to the ones they were now facing in each other. But if Lee was guilty of underestimating Grant, his I Corps commander was not. Longstreet had been Grant's closest friend in the prewar army, even serving as best man at Grant's wedding to a Longstreet cousin, and he understood the new Union leader in a way that Lee did not. "That man," Longstreet warned, "will fight us every day and every hour till the end of this war." Lee ignored the warning at his own considerable peril.

Meanwhile, preparations continued apace in the Union camp. At Brandy Station, Meade's jumping-off point, a 3-story-high mountain of supplies grew steadily higher every day, a veritable cornucopia of soldiers' needs—bread, beans, beef, pork, dried apples, coffee, sugar, tea, vinegar, molasses and potatoes. Finally, on May 3, the men were told to cook three days' full rations and pack an extra three days' partial rations, along with 50 rounds of

ammunition. Experienced veterans knew what was coming, and they sought to advise the thousands of new recruits—all green as grass—on how to prepare for the upcoming campaign. Frank Wilkeson, a new artilleryman, was taken in hand by a grizzled veteran named Jellet, who "came to me that evening and kindly looked into my knapsack, and advised me as to what to keep and what to throw away. He cut my kit down to a change of under-clothing, three pairs of socks, a pair of spare shoes, three plugs of navy tobacco, a rubber blanket, and a pair of woolen blankets.

"Now, my lad," Jellet said, "do not pick up anything excepting food and tobacco, while you are on the march. Get hold of all the food you can. Cut haversacks from dead men. Steal from the infantry if you can. Let your aim be to secure food and food and still more food, and keep your eyes open for tobacco. Do not look at clothing or shoes or blankets. You can always draw those articles from the quartermaster. Stick to your gun through thick and thin. Do not straggle. Fill your canteen at every stream we cross and wherever you get the chance elsewhere. Never wash your feet until the day's march is over. If you do, you will surely blister." Finally, Jellet advised Wilkeson not to burn his permanent camp. "Leave things as they are," he said. "We may want them before snow flies."

At Union Army headquarters, no such qualified sense of optimism obtained. Among his other eccentricities, Grant refused to turn back after he started for a location. Indeed, if he passed a street he was looking for, he would circle the block rather than retrace his steps. Nor did he intend to do so now. After issuing his last order on the night of May 3, Grant casually crossed his legs, lit another cigar and began chatting with his staff. He explained his general reasons for choosing the eastern route through the Wilderness, instead of attempting to move around Lee's left flank to the north. It would simplify resupply problems, he said, while also screening Washington from possible attack. Then the normally unobtrusive Grant surprised his aides by leaping to his feet, going over to a map on the wall and circling the towns of Rich-



The edge of the Wilderness on May 5, 1864. Lee had ordered the region's terrain carefully surveyed in anticipation of a Federal advance that he hoped would pass through it.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

mond and Petersburg with his hands. "When my troops are there," Grant said, "Richmond is mine. Lee must retreat or surrender." It was becoming convincingly clear to everyone present that Grant did not envision a retreat of his own.

At 3 a.m. on May 4, the Army of the Potomac began crossing the Rapidan at Germanna Ford. Horsemen of the 3rd Indiana Cavalry splashed into the waist-deep stream, expecting a fusillade of bullets from the Confederate pickets on the other side. It never came. Obeying Lee's orders not to contest the crossing, the pickets of the 1st North Carolina Cavalry fell back from the river and scattered into the pre-dawn darkness, leaving behind their half-cooked breakfast. The Rebels, said one Union trooper, "gave evidence of great fright." This was probably mere playacting, since Southern scouts had followed the enemy's movements from the moment they had broken camp at midnight and begun heading toward the ford. Whatever the case, Federal engineers led by Captain William Folwell quickly followed the horsemen across the stream and began erecting two parallel bridges, 40 or 50 feet apart and 220 feet across. By dawn, when the carefully timed march of the infantry brought them to the ford, three temporary roads had already been chopped into the steep banks leading up from the river, and the foot soldiers in Maj. Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren's V Corps marched smartly over the river and into the tangled gloom of the Wilderness.

Six miles downriver, at Ely's Ford, Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock's II Corps made a similar uncontested crossing. A canvas pontoon bridge had been thrown across the ford, but many of the infantrymen eschewed the bridge and simply waded across in water up to their hips, holding their cartridge boxes and rifles above their heads to keep them dry. Behind them they left a trail of discarded blankets and overcoats, so many that Wilkeson believed "it would

be no exaggeration to say that one could have marched to the Rapidan on overcoats and blankets that were thrown away by tired soldiers." An irate Connecticut chaplain estimated the wastage at between 20 and 30 thousand dollars. Wilkeson, who marched with his fellow gunners behind a regiment of heavily sweating German immigrants, watched as the Germans struggled painfully up the steep riverbank, discarding their bulging knapsacks as they made their way. "Near the top of the hill we found many well-filled haversacks," he recalled, "and we picked up every one of them and hung them on the limbers and caissons and guns. The mine was rich, and we worked it thoroughly."

Grant and his personal entourage followed the line of march to Germanna Ford. Loud cheers greeted them along the way. Usually a plain dresser, Grant had donned a smart pair of yellowish-brown gloves and a black slouch hat with a gold cord to mark the occasion. Accompanying him on the ride south was his political mentor, Illinois Congressman Elihu B. Washburne, who had been instrumental in Grant's phenomenal rise to the top. Washburne was dressed entirely in black, and puzzled soldiers wondered aloud whether the somber figure was Grant's "personal undertaker." Shortly before noon, Grant crossed the ford and set up temporary headquarters in an old farmhouse on a bluff overlooking the river. Nearby, Meade had established his own headquarters, and his personal flag—a golden eagle wreathed in silver on a lavender backdrop—flourished in the breeze.

Grant, sitting on the porch of the ramshackle farmhouse smoking an ever-present cigar, asked jokingly: "What's this! Is Imperial Caesar anywhere about here?" When a Northern newspaperman, taking advantage of the general's good mood, asked him how long it would take to reach Richmond, Grant responded airily, "About four days—that is, if General Lee becomes a party to the agreement; but if he objects, the trip will undoubtedly be prolonged."

Grant's untypically jovial mood was cut short a few minutes later when he was handed an intercepted message from the Confederates showing that Ewell's corps was moving forward swiftly, destination as yet unknown. Immediately, Grant ordered Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside to prepare to cross the Rapidan with his IX Corps, which Grant had hoped to leave on the other side of the river to safeguard the Orange & Alexandria Railroad. Now, with evidence that Lee was moving with more dispatch than he had anticipated (veteran campaigners could have told him that would be the case), Grant ordered Burnside to "make forced marches until you reach this place. Start your troops now in the rear the moment they can be got off, and require them to make a night march." In the meantime, the II Corps had moved into position on the old killing ground at Chancellorsville, while the V and VI corps (the latter under Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick) were moving down the Germanna Plank Road to the point where it intersected the Orange Turnpike. There, they were to halt for the night while the lengthy and ponderous wagon train caught up with them.

The army had made good progress, but it had not passed completely through the Wilderness, and many of the soldiers, particularly those camping among the disinterred remains of the hastily buried Union dead at Chancellorsville, were increasingly uneasy. "A sense of ominous dread which many of us found impossible to shake off" seized the men, one soldier recalled. "It was a very easy

matter to discover just where pools of blood had been," another noted, "for those particular spots were marked by the greenest tufts of grass and brightest flowers to be found upon the field." Brigadier General Robert McAllister sent his wife a somewhat ghoulish present of "two or three pretty violets that I picked upon the very ground where my regiment stood and fought so splendidly [the year before]. The ground was made rich by the blood of our brave soldiers. I thought the flowers would be a relic prized by you." An even more grisly relic was unearthed by a less romantic infantryman, who pried up a bullet-shattered skull from a shallow grave and rolled it across the ground. "That is what you are all coming to, and some of you will start toward it tomorrow," he warned. Another Chancellorsville veteran spooked his campmates by noting that "the wounded are liable to be burned to death. I am willing to take my chances of getting killed, but I dread to have a leg broken and then be burned slowly; and these woods will surely be burned if we fight here." Few of his listeners slept well that night.

The Union soldiers, veterans and newcomers alike, were right to entertain ominous forebodings. While they made camp, the battle-hardened Confederates were moving toward them through the woods, getting in position for a daylight attack that few of the Southerners doubted would be successful. Lee was still unsure of Grant's ultimate intentions, whether his new adversary was heading for Fredericksburg, to the south, or was swinging around for a thrust westward toward Richmond. Lee wanted to be prepared for either contingency. He ordered Ewell and his II Corps to march due east along the Orange Turnpike until they passed the old fortifications at Mine Run, while A.P. Hill's III Corps was to move along the Orange Plank Road to New Verdierville. Once in place, the two corps would be within easy supporting distance of one another. Meanwhile, Longstreet's I Corps, farther west at Gordonsville, was directed to move across country toward Todd's Tavern, at the southern tip of the Wilderness. There it would be

in place, said Lee, to "intercept the enemy's march, and cause him to develop plans before he could get out of the Wilderness."

Lee, traveling with Hill's corps, camped for the night at New Verdierville, where he directed Ewell to "bring [the enemy] to battle as soon now as possible." With Longstreet still a day's march behind, it was a risky tactic, but Lee seldom shied away from taking risks. With less than a third of Grant's manpower, he intended to jab hard into the Union flank and instigate a battle with the full knowledge that his own most dependable corps would not be available to fight for another full day. To Lee's mind, this was the only thing he could do. If Grant got through the Wilderness unscathed, the full brunt of the Union Army would have a clear path around Lee's southern flank to Richmond, and the war would be lost anyway. As Lee had already made clear in a letter to one of his sons, he did not intend to lose without a fight. Perhaps he would die, but "if victorious, we have everything to live for. If defeated, there will be nothing left for us to live for." By attacking at once, even with only two-thirds of his available force, he would at least give himself and his army a fighting chance. At that stage of the war, it was the best they could hope for. Grant's incautious delay in traversing the Wilderness would give them that chance.

The morning of May 5 dawned clear and warm. By 8 a.m., it had already grown so hot that some out-of-shape Union soldiers, having spent the long winter months eating and lounging about camp, were reeling from heat prostration. Not that they were being hurried along—the pace of the morning's march was "a moderate

Zouaves of the 146th New York rush to the aid of the 140th New York, already battling Brig. Gen. George H. Stewart's brigade in Saunders' Field, in Into the Wilderness, by Keith Porter Farley commented, "After about five minutes of fighting, the 140th's Captain Porter Farley commented, 'It seemed as if the regiment had been annihilated.'



gait," Wilkeson recalled, "with occasional short halts." Both Grant and Meade believed that Lee had moved his men back inside the fortifications along Mine Run, 10 miles away, where presumably they would wait politely to be attacked at Grant's leisure. In the meantime, Grant would be able to reunite the disparate wings of his army. Accordingly, Hancock was directed to swing his II Corps southwest from Chancellorsville to Parker's Store, an abandoned country market, where he would link up with Warren's V Corps from the north. Behind Warren, Sedgwick's VI Corps would swing into place and wait for Burnside's IX Corps, which was crossing Germanna Ford after an all-night march. When the entire Federal line had been reunited, Grant intended to move west and make contact with Lee's army in the clear ground beyond the Wilderness.

As usual, however, Lee moved first. Having received word the night before from Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart, his cavalry chief, that Union horsemen were screening the approach to Parker's Store, Lee correctly divined that Grant was indeed intending to move west from the Wilderness. He no longer had to worry about the Federals passing around his right flank. Instead, they were conveniently standing still on unfavorable ground where their vast numerical superiority, their generally more modern small arms and their deadly artillery would be negated to a great extent by the narrow roads, thick undergrowth, limited visibility and lack of maneuvering room. If Ewell and Hill could hold them in place a little longer, Longstreet's corps, swinging up from the south, would be ideally situated to strike them in the flank and roll them up as swiftly and easily as Lt. Gen. T.J. "Stonewall" Jackson had done on almost the same ground, exactly one year earlier. To his aide, Colonel Charles Venable, Lee "expressed his pleasure that the Federal general had not profited by General Hooker's Wilderness experience, and that he seemed inclined to throw away to some extent the immense advantage which his great superiority in numbers gave him." Perhaps, his shining reputation notwithstanding, Grant would prove to be no worthier an opponent than Hooker.

Events quickly outraced either general's ability to control them. On the morning of May 5, skirmishing for control of the Orange Plank Road opened at Parker's Store between the 5th New York Cavalry and the 47th North Carolina Infantry. At the same time, Union scouts reported the approach of a sizable enemy contingent on the Orange Turnpike, 2½ miles north. Brigadier General Charles Griffin, commanding the Union rear guard division on the turnpike, reported to Warren that the Rebels were fast approaching. "I do not believe that Warren ever had a greater surprise in his life," ordnance officer Morris Schaff reported. Warren hastily ordered Griffin to "push a force out at once against the enemy, and see what force he has." Meanwhile, Warren located Meade and told him of the developments. "If there is to be any fighting this side of Mine Run," said Meade, "let us do it right off." Meade ordered Hancock to halt II Corps at Todd's Tavern until they could determine what the Rebels were intending. Grant, back at his Germanna Ford headquarters, approved Meade's arrangements, but added a characteristic addendum: "If any opportunity presents itself for pitching into a part of Lee's army, do so."

Lee, who was still traveling with Hill's corps along the Orange Plank Road, had given Ewell much the same order the night before. Now, however, hearing the scattered firing at the front, he apparently thought better of his earlier order. He told Major Campbell Brown, Ewell's son-in-law, to tell his kinsman that "above all General Ewell was not to get his troops entangled so as to be unable to disengage them, in case the enemy was in force." Lee had become concerned that Ewell and Hill, who were still separated by three miles of impenetrable woods, would not be able to resist a concentrated Union assault. Moreover, there was a dangerous

gap in the center between them. If Grant attacked with sufficient force, the two Confederate corps would be unable to support one another and would be easy pickings for the overwhelming numbers of bluecoats that Lee was suddenly aware they were facing. And Longstreet's corps was still a day away.

On both sides of the battlefield, an uneasy quiet hung in the air. No one quite knew what lay in front of them, and the jungle-thick countryside made any accurate accounting impossible. Grant, a man of action who did not like suspense—beneath his bland facade was a surprisingly nervous and sensitive individual—waited impatiently for Griffin to "pitch into" the Confederates along the Orange Turnpike. But Griffin, like Grant a West Point graduate and Mexican War veteran, waited in turn for other Union



Ignoring his setback in the Wilderness, Grant, accompanied by Maj. Gen. George G. Meade, orders his weary troops to resume their advance, in On to Richmond, by Mort Künstler. Grant's decision transformed a tactical stalemate into a decisive moral victory.

divisions to move into place along his flanks. He was convinced, as Grant was not, that a significant Rebel force was concealed on the other side of the treeline. For three long hours the impasse continued, while Grant chewed out Meade, Meade chewed out Warren, and Warren chewed out Griffin. Finally, at 1 p.m., Griffin reluctantly gave the order to move out.

The Union line of advance straddled the Orange Turnpike across a 2-mile front. A bramble-choked cornfield, Saunders' Field, lay immediately in front of them. Ewell's Confederates, concealed in the trees on the western edge of the field, had already sighted-in their deadly muskets, and their first well-aimed bullets kicked up dirt like the big drops of a coming shower along a dusty road. The Northern soldiers waiting to attack experienced suspense and

dread that cannot be adequately told in words. At the sound of a bugle, they rose to their feet and moved forward, leaning slightly as if into a stiff breeze.

On the Union right, north of the turnpike, the gaily colored uniforms of Colonel George Ryan's 140th New York Zouaves made easy targets for the Rebel marksmen. Regimental Captain Porter Farley, in the front line, saw his men "melt away like snow. Men disappeared as if the earth had swallowed them. It seemed as if the regiment had been annihilated." Making matters worse, the regiment was also taking fire from the right rear, where a curve in the woods concealed more Confederate riflemen. The 140th fell back, joined by a second Zouave regiment, the 146th New York, which had been treated just as roughly. Back inside their own lines, an



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Skirmish in the Wilderness, by Winslow Homer. The dense forest and undergrowth of the region offset any advantages in range and accuracy that Union firearms may have held over worn-out Confederate muskets. To one Rebel, it was not a battle, but "bushwhacking on a grand scale."

anguished Ryan peered through the dense smoke for some sign of his men. "My God," he cried, "I'm the first colonel I ever knew who couldn't tell where his regiment was!" Much of it was lying dead or wounded in the ragged cornfield. Ryan, weeping, clutched the neck of an aide. Of the 529 men who had charged across the field moments earlier, 268 were now casualties, including almost all of the regiment's officers.

On the southern side of the turnpike, Brig. Gen. Joseph Bartlett's 3rd Brigade made a better showing, sending Brig. Gen. John M. Jones' Virginia brigade reeling backward in confusion. "A red volcano yawned before us," one Maine soldier remembered, "and vomited forth fire, and lead, and death." The woods were a veritable bedlam of noise, so loud that the soldiers could not even hear their own rifles fire, but merely felt the recoil against their shoulders. "What a medley of sounds," Union Private Theodore Gerish recalled. "The incessant roar of the rifles; the screaming of bullets; the forest on fire; men cheering, groaning, yelling, swearing and praying!" General Jones, seeing his line waver as the enemy struck hard at his exposed right flank, rode to the front to encourage his troops. Suddenly, he was cornered by two Pennsylvania privates and ordered to surrender. When he refused to hand over his sword to men of inferior rank, the unimpressed duo simply shot him off his horse and stole his sword. He died immediately.

Bartlett's attackers soon outran their support. Hopelessly entangled in the vine-choked woods beyond Saunders' Field, they were struck in turn by flanking fire on two sides. The order came to fall back and regroup. Bartlett himself rode back into the open field, blood trickling from his scratched face. Ordered by the Rebels to surrender, Bartlett shook his fist in defiance and spurred his horse across the field. A welter of bullets crashed into the animal and sent it somersaulting to the ground. The Southerners cheered lustily, but a moment later the shaken and disheveled Bartlett somehow crawled from beneath the dead horse and hobbled to safety. (He would live to receive the formal surrender of arms from the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox 11 months hence.)

On Bartlett's left, south of Saunders' Field, the three brigades of Brig. Gen. James Wadsworth's 4th Division moved forward in tandem with Griffin's attack. Brigadier General Lysander Cutler's famed Iron Brigade held the right flank. Confederates in the woods beyond could clearly hear Union voices shout, "Here's our western men!" as the Iron Brigade made its way into battle. No sooner had the Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin regiments advanced than they were met with a withering fire on their exposed flank. Stymied in front by Brig. Gen. George Doles' Georgia brigade, the Federals were sitting ducks for a crushing counterattack led by Brig. Gen. John B. Gordon's veteran brigade. Spearheading Gordon's attack was a leather-lunged private named James E. Spivey of the 26th Georgia, who was famous in both armies for his awe-inspiring battle cry, "a kind of scream or low, like a terrible bull, with a kind of neigh mixed along with it, and nearly as loud as a steam whistle." Known as "Gordon's Bull," Spivey gave his accustomed roar and Gordon's men crashed into the Iron Brigade from the north. For the first time in its proud history, the Iron Brigade broke and ran, leaving behind a pair of silver bugles that the Georgians happily scooped up and used until the end of the war.

Wadsworth's other brigades fared little better. In short order, Brig. Gen. James Rice and Colonel Roy Stone brought their shattered troops back to the rear as well, and Wadsworth desperately attempted to stabilize his line and hold off repeated Confederate counterattacks across the body-strewn fields to the west. "As a grand, inspiring spectacle it was highly unsatisfactory, owing to the powder smoke obscuring the vision," wrote one private. "At times we could not see the Confederate line, but that made no difference; we kept on firing just as though they were in full view. We gained ground at times, and then dead Confederates lay on the ground as thickly as dead Union soldiers did behind us. Then we would fall back, fighting stubbornly, but steadily giving ground, until the dead were all clad in blue."

For over an hour, a blistering cross-fire swept Saunders' Field and the woods below it, while wounded Union and Confederate sol-

dieters squirmed facedown in the dust, unable to move forward or backward. Then the veteran troops' worst predictions came true. Brushfires kindled by bullets striking breastworks erupted on all sides, filling the air with the unmistakable, sickening stench of burning flesh. Ominous, muffled popping sounds marked the explosion of dozens of cartridge belts tied around wounded soldiers' waists, sending deadly shards of tin slicing through their bowels. Many of the wounded committed suicide to avoid the evil tongues of flame snaking toward them on all sides.

As the bloodletting continued around Saunders' Field, Sedgwick's VI Corps moved into the line north of Warren's Corps and joined the fray. The heavy gun smoke and tangled underbrush so limited the soldiers' line of sight that one newly arrived Wisconsin soldier recalled that the men "soon began firing by *earsight*." Sedgwick himself barely escaped death when a Rebel cannonball struck within a yard of him, decapitating a private and sending the unfortunate man's head crashing full into the face of Captain Thomas Hyde, knocking him to the ground and covering him with blood and brains. "I was not much use as a staff officer for full fifteen minutes," Hyde admitted.

At the south end of the battle, Brig. Gen. George Getty's lone Union division was holding onto the key intersection of the Orange Plank Road and the Brock Road linking the Wilderness thoroughfare to Todd's Tavern, where Hancock's II Corps was still posted. Now, directed by Meade to attack down the road, Getty's troops crept forward, scarcely able to see 10 yards ahead of them. They had not gone far along the road before they were met by a terrible blast from Maj. Gen. Cadmus Wilcox's Confederate brigade. One North Carolinian in the brigade remembered: "A butchery pure and simple it was, unrelieved by any of the arts of war in which the exercise of military skill and tact robs the hour of some of its horrors." To another Confederate, it was not even a battle, but simply "bushwhacking on a grand scale."

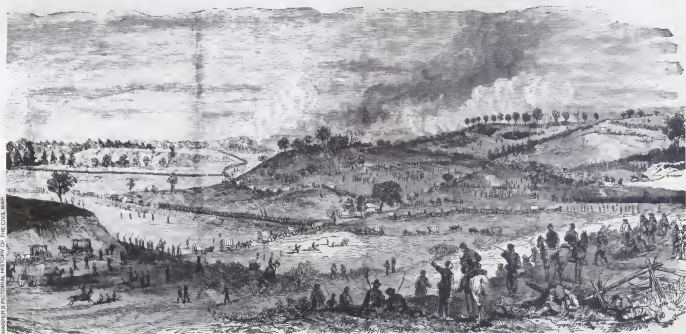
Hancock's corps, arriving on the scene, rushed forward to support Getty's chewed-up division, but met the same brutal reception. Hancock himself managed to rally the men behind an opportune line of rifle pits, while Brig. Gen. John Gibbon's division hurried up from Todd's Tavern to lend strength to the assault. Behind the line, at Grant's headquarters, the sounds of Hancock's attack could clearly be heard, but no one could follow what was happening. It sounded, said Grant's aide Adam Badeau, "like an

incessant peal of thunder." As for Grant, he continued nervously whittling pieces of wood into formless shavings. Otherwise, he betrayed no emotion. But one order he had already given revealed as clearly as a dozen grand speeches what his mindset was that day: all but one bridge across the Rapidan had been torn down. There would be no turning back.

For three more hours, until well after dark, the fighting continued in the flame-torn woods, as first Union, then Confederate forces crashed blindly into one another, only to be sent stumbling backward in the smoke and fire. "It was like fighting a forest fire," North Carolina Captain R.S. William remembered. Another Southerner, standing in the middle of the roadway with blood dripping from his shattered arm, amazedly told new troops rushing toward the front that "dead Yankees were *knee deep* all over about four acres of ground."

Near sunset, the head of Longstreet's relief column finally reached the outskirts of the battlefield, having marched 28 lung-bursting miles in one day. The men, exhausted, flopped down on the side of the road, too tired to pitch their tents. Longstreet allowed them to rest for several hours, then started them eastward at about 1 a.m. He had received a puzzling order from Lee—instead of continuing toward Todd's Tavern to attack the Union left, he was directed to veer northward and unite with the troops of the III Corps on the Plank Road. First reports from the battlefield were all favorable, but Longstreet was not reassured by the sudden change of direction. Literally in the dark about Lee's intentions, Longstreet got his men underway, but the road was overgrown with bushes and difficult to follow. Progress was excruciatingly slow. Meanwhile, Lee sent a telegram to Confederate Secretary of War James Seddon, reporting that "the enemy crossed the Rapidan yesterday.... A strong attack was made upon Ewell, who repulsed it.... The enemy subsequently concentrated upon General Hill, who resisted repeated and desperate assaults.... By the blessing of God we maintained our position."

At Union headquarters, Grant had a different view of the first day's fighting. "I feel pretty well satisfied with the results of the engagement," he told Meade, "for it is evident that Lee attempted by a bold movement to strike this enemy in flank... but in this he failed." That was not quite true; Lee, in fact, had held back from any all-out flank attack. Still, Grant did not want Lee to take the initiative the next morning. He directed Meade to have Hancock



A sketch by J. Becker shows Union forces pouring into the Wilderness on May 5 while the smoke of battle rises in the distance. By the afternoon, Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock's II Corps had driven Hill's Rebels back, only to be thrown back in turn by Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's I Corps.



BATTLES AND LEADERS OF THE CIVIL WAR

As the Wilderness catches fire on the evening of May 5, Federal troops rescue as many of their wounded as they can. Hundreds of less fortunate soldiers burned to death. To Grant's aide, Lt. Col. Horace Porter, it seemed as if "hell itself had usurped the place of earth."

and Wadsworth attack Hill's corps at 4:30 a.m. Burnside, for his part, was to send one division to support Hancock while his other two divisions attacked Hill in flank, and Warren and Sedgwick simultaneously attacked along their respective fronts. "We shall have a busy day tomorrow," Grant advised his staff, "and I think we had better get all the sleep we can tonight. I am a confirmed believer in the restorative qualities of sleep, and always like to get at least seven hours of it." In the pitch-black fields to the west, where occasional brushfires still flared in the dark, thousands of Union and Confederate soldiers were lost in a sleep from which they would never awaken.

At the south end of the battlefield, few of the ranking Confederate officers were able to sleep. Again and again, couriers went west along the Orange Plank Road, searching in vain for Longstreet's corps. Meanwhile, at Hill's headquarters, Maj. Gen. Henry Heth argued unsuccessfully with Hill to rearrange Heth's and Cadmus Wilcox's divisions on either side of the roadway. As it now stood, Heth warned, the two divisions were so mixed up that "a skirmish line could drive both my division and Wilcox's, situated as we are now." Hill refused, saying that Longstreet would arrive soon and take over the next day's defense. Heth was unpersuaded, knowing Longstreet's reputation for moving slow and arriving late. "I walked the road all night," Heth remembered. "Twelve, two, three o'clock came, and half-past three, and no reinforcements." Lieutenant Colonel William C. Poague, whose artillery battalion was posted nearby, was alarmed to find many of Hill's III Corps sleeping unconcerned along the road, their arms casually stacked in rows beside them. "I asked an officer the mean-

ing of the apparent confusion and unreadiness of our lines," said Poague, "and was told that Hill's men had been informed that they were to be relieved by fresh troops before daylight, and were expecting the relieving forces any minute. I asked where the Yankees were. He didn't know certainly, but supposed they were in the woods in front. He struck me as being very indifferent and not at all concerned about the situation."

The next morning, at first light, Hancock's corps, augmented by divisions from the V and VI Corps, fell on the unready Confederates from the east and north. As Heth had warned, Hill's troops were unable to resist the massive onslaught. Some fought stubbornly before falling back; others simply turned tail and ran, convinced that it was impossible to hold the ground and foolish to attempt it. One unit of sharpshooters, ordered to the front, took the ungentlemanly precaution of propping wounded Yankees against the trees in front of them to stop the Union firing. The Federals understandably argued against the "inhuman experiment," but the Confederates were unmoved. "We replied that their own men would certainly not fire on them," one sharpshooter recalled. "The object in view was to stop the firing." It worked for a while, but the onrushing Northerners simply ran around the advanced Rebel position and continued their attack unchecked.

By 5:30 a.m., Hill's corps was shattered, and Hancock was beaming in jubilation. "We are driving them beautifully," he cried, drawing out the last word for emphasis. "Tell Meade we are driving them most beautifully." In a short time, Meade responded, and his return message quickly turned Hancock's smile into a scowl. "I am ordered to tell you, sir," said a messenger, "that only one division of

General Burnside is up, but that he will go in as soon as he can be put in position."

"I knew it," Hancock spat. "Just what I expected. If he could attack now, we would smash A.P. Hill all to pieces!" As it was, Hancock's own men had outrun their supports and lost momentum. Ammunition was running low, and the soldiers were once again becoming hopelessly enmeshed in the tangled briars and underbrush. The Union battle line stretched for over a mile across the Orange Plank Road, disappearing on either side into the junglelike forest.

A soldier came up to Hancock with a captured Rebel in tow. "I was ordered to report that this prisoner here belongs to Longstreet's corps," he told the general. The prisoner confirmed the news. "It was too true," remembered Hancock aide Theodore Lyman. "Longstreet, coming in all haste from Orange Court House, had fallen desperately on our advance."

Many on the Confederate side of the field might have disputed just how hastily Longstreet had come up, but he had finally arrived. Brigadier General Joseph Kershaw's division, in the lead, swerved to the south of the Orange Plank Road, while Maj. Gen. Charles Field's division headed north. In the vanguard of Field's division was Brig. Gen. John Gregg's tough veteran brigade of Texans and Arkansans. When Gregg's troops swept into battle, past a hard-firing artillery battery, Robert E. Lee himself rode out to greet them. "Who are you, my boys?" Lee cried. "Texas boys," they yelled back. "Texans always move them!" Lee cried, as near to losing his famous composure as he ever came.

Gregg's voice boomed out. "Attention Texas Brigade," he called. "The eyes of General Lee are upon you. Forward, march!" With a loud cheer, the Texans broke for the front. "I would charge hell itself for that old man," one officer cried. Suddenly, the men realized that Lee himself was riding forward with them, his eyes shining brightly. "Go back, General Lee, go back," cried the men. "Lee

to the rear!" With some difficulty, Lee's aides managed to get the general to turn his horse around and let the infantrymen handle the charge. Longstreet, who came upon the scene at that moment, said later that Lee was "off his balance." If so, it was due mainly to Longstreet's delay in getting to the front. Gregg's men succeeded in blunting the Union attack, but at a terrible cost. Of the 800 men in the brigade, less than 250 escaped unharmed. Nevertheless, the Union offensive had been halted in its tracks, and the Confederate battle line now stretched unbroken from the Orange Plank Road north to the Orange Turnpike.

At 10 a.m., Longstreet received word from his chief engineer that an unfinished railroad bed, not shown on any maps, lay open and unguarded on the Union left flank. Longstreet hastily assembled an attack force, three brigades strong and personally directed by his trusted aide, Lt. Col. G. Moxley Sorrel. The Confederates tore through the Union flank unchecked, sending it careening back in despair. "The terrible tempest of disaster swept on down the Union line," one New Yorker recalled years later, "beating back brigade and brigade until upwards of twenty thousand veterans were fleeing, every man for himself."

Sorrel hurried back to tell Longstreet the good news. Along the Plank Road, the 26-year-old officer—who had never before commanded troops in battle—encountered "quite a party of mounted officers and men riding with [Longstreet]." Brigadier General Micah Jenkins of South Carolina, who was scarcely older than Sorrel, threw his arm around the colonel and cried, "Sorrel, it was splendid; we shall smash them now." But the happy scene did not

Troops of the Federal II Corps reinforce their defensive line in anticipation of another Confederate assault. Struck in the left flank by Longstreet's corps on May 6, Hancock admitted to Longstreet after the war that his assault column had been "rolled...up like a wet blanket."





Ts'ao Sung (870-920 AD) said, "A single general's reputation is made out of 10,000 corpses." Timothy O'Sullivan photographed the burial of Grant's Wilderness dead at Fredericksburg on May 12, 1864.

last long. As Longstreet's party proceeded up the road they were suddenly struck by a volley of gunfire from the thickly tangled woods alongside. Understandably jittery Confederates in the underbrush, mistaking the dark-clad horsemen for Union cavalry, had opened fire, blasting Jenkins from his saddle and sending Longstreet reeling in his seat. Jenkins, struck in the head, was mortally wounded. Longstreet, with wounds to the shoulder and throat, was wheezing bloody foam from his mouth. "Tell General Field to take command and move forward with the whole force and gain the Brock Road," he gasped.

Longstreet's wounding fatally stalled the Confederate advance. The Kentucky-born Field, who was still suffering from the after-effects of a crippling wound at Second Manassas, took several hours to rearrange his lines. The delay allowed Hancock's men to construct a row of formidable chest-high breastworks of logs and dirt, and to clear an unobstructed line of fire in front of them. When the Southern forces finally went forward again at 4:15 p.m., they ran head-on into a well-rested enemy supported by 12 judiciously placed artillery pieces. What followed was "the most desperate assault of the day," one Massachusetts defender recalled. Northern war correspondent Charles Page, an eyewitness to the attack, called it the "most wicked assault thus far encountered—brief in duration, but terrific in power and superhuman momentum."

Screaming the Rebel yell at the top of their lungs, the Confederates plunged through the forest toward Hancock's line. The "unquenchable fellows," as an admiring Union officer termed them, knelt in the dust 30 yards from the Federal breastworks, desperately firing their muskets at the few heads bobbing above the works. Most of their bullets flew high, while the blueclad defenders blasted away at point-blank range in comparative safety. Aided by a quick-spreading brushfire, some of Field's men actually managed to breach the Union line, but a swift counterattack drove them back. New York infantryman Charles Weygant described the ensuing rout: "Over the works rushed the Union line with clubbed muskets, swords, and bayonets, right at the now totally demoralized Confederates, who broke for the rear, and fled in the wildest disorder across the slashing and down through the woods again."

At least one high-ranking Confederate officer, artillery Colonel Edward Porter Alexander, believed the afternoon attack should never have happened. "The attack ought never, never to have been made," he wrote after the war. "It was sending a boy on a man's errand. It was wasting good soldiers whom we could not spare. It was discouraging pluck and spirit by setting it an impos-

sible task." Given Lee's erratic behavior that afternoon, it was indeed a questionable decision, comparable in scope and result to the forlorn assault at Gettysburg by Maj. Gen. George Pickett's doomed division. Something deep in Lee's psyche could not accept frustration—much less defeat. Having already told his son that he could see "nothing to live for" if he lost the war, Lee's ill-considered decision to attack entrenched Union fortifications that afternoon guaranteed that hundreds of his men would not have the same freedom of choice in the future.

As for Grant, he was perfectly willing to accept a tactical draw on the battlefield. Following a sunset repulse of Gordon's division at the north end of the Union line along the Orange Turnpike, the general called off any more Federal attacks. He

had spent the afternoon nervously whittling—he wore out his new yellow gloves in the process—and smoking some 20 cigars. Studying a map with his aide, Horace Porter, Grant figuratively pulled in his horns. "I do not hope to gain any decided advantage from the fighting in this forest," the general declared. "I did expect excellent results from Hancock's movement early this morning, when he started the enemy on the run; but it was impossible for him to see his own troops, or the true position of the enemy, and the success gained could not be followed through in such country. I can certainly drive Lee back into his works, but I shall not assault him there; he would have all the advantages in such a fight. If he falls back and entrenches, my notion is to move promptly toward the left. This will, in all probability, compel him to try and throw himself between us and Richmond, and in such a movement I hope to be able to attack him in a more open country, and outside of his breastworks."

Subsequent events proved Grant correct. The next day, while Lee's exhausted soldiers clung to their own breastworks and nursed their battle wounds, the Union army began moving southeast around the Confederate flank, heading for Spotsylvania Court House, 10 miles away. Lee quickly moved to intercept Grant, realizing as he did that he now faced an opponent who would not retreat after he had been sorely tested. Nearly 30,000 men, Union and Confederate, had fallen in the Wilderness without noticeably altering the deadly logic of Grant's mathematics: the more men he lost, the more men Lee would lose, and Grant had all the numbers on his side.

The two armies would meet again at Spotsylvania, and many other places, before the war was over, but no one—general or private—would ever again suffer the unique horrors of the Wilderness. Grant, who was not given to overstatement, said later that "more desperate fighting has not been witnessed on this continent than that of the 5th and 6th of May." His aide Porter was virtually biblical in his judgment. "It seemed as though Christian men had turned to fiends," he wrote, "and hell itself had usurped the place of earth." For all concerned, the Battle of the Wilderness had indeed been a hell on earth, one that survivors would never forget. □

Roy Morris, Jr., is editor of America's Civil War Magazine and the author of well-received biographies on Union General Phil Sheridan and journalist-veteran Ambrose Bierce. For further reading, he recommends Noah André Trudeau's *Bloody Roads South* and Gordon C. Rhea's *The Battle of the Wilderness*.

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INTERVIEW

A LEGIONNAIRE'S FIVE-YEAR ODYSSEY

No sooner had Karl Hansen been released from Vietnamese captivity than he was shipped off to another brutal guerrilla war—in Algeria.

By Brian Loosmore



They landed by parachute in the predawn, when the darkness is most dense. Wallowing in soft mud, they struggled with their canopies and realized they had not been taught how to take off their harnesses. Now it was too late. They were surrounded and outnumbered. There was no chance to put up a fight.

Karl Hansen was 19. His childhood in Germany was disrupted by World War II, but he had grown into a tall, strong man. Alone and restless, he worked as a bricklayer until his thirst for travel got the better of him. In September 1953, on an impulse, he joined the French Foreign Legion. Hansen described his activities in French Indochina and Algeria during a recent interview.

Military History: Why did you join the Foreign Legion?

Hansen: I didn't know much about it at that time. It seemed romantic, and the recruiting officer painted a rosy picture of travel and adventure. *Mein Gott*, if I had only known then what was to happen!

MH: What was it really like in those days?

Hansen: The Foreign Legion is a unique force of infantry with a distinguished record. The officers are French, but all other ranks are foreigners—anyone except the French. In my time most were German, many of them World War II veterans, but there also were Spaniards, Italians, Belgians, you name it. No questions were asked on joining, so we had every type of character. Orders were in French, and we had to learn the language quickly. I didn't find it too difficult.

MH: What training did you get?

Hansen: They smuggled us into France by air and took us to the Legion depot. We had to take off our civilian clothes and get into the shower. When we came out of the water, there were no towels, and a soldier with a bucket of anti-louse powder threw the powder over us. We had to put on our clothes again, still wet and sticky! We trained in North Africa, but they soon realized that there was a desperate shortage of legionnaires in Indochina, so we had just four weeks of training instead of the usual four months. Everything was done running "at the double." We learned to use the MAS 36 rifle (7.5mm, 5-round repeater) and later the MAT 49 machine pistol (9mm, 32-round clips) until we could take them apart and reassemble them blindfolded. We had American "pineapple" hand grenades, with which one of our men blew himself up. They taught me the machine gun, too, and I found I was naturally good with a gun. Another skill I learned was to throw a knife. I seemed to have a natural aptitude for it. I could hit a rat with a knife! We did all the usual training in the terrible heat until we were thought fit to be in the Legion and were presented with our *kepi blanc*, the white helmet of the Legion. It was a proud moment for me.

MH: Were you sent to Indochina imme-

diately after you completed your training?

Hansen: Yes. We went by ship. Two men tried to get away by jumping overboard in the Suez Canal. They were shot dead in the water and left there. It took 17 days to reach Saigon, and a few more days in a rotten old boat to Haiphong. All the action was in the northern province of Tonkin. The food in the boat was terrible, and we threw most of it away. But we were given pinard, a bitter red wine, to take away the hunger. It was a principle in the Legion to keep the troops hungry—it made them sharper and better foragers. There was always pinard! We went by train from Haiphong to Hanoi and ran into an ambush. We did not stop, and I think we gave as good as we got. It was my first action, and I was very excited.

MH: Where was your unit stationed?

Hansen: I joined the 3rd R.E.I. (*Régiment Étranger d'Infanterie*) at Bac Ninh, where the regiment's 1st Battalion was severely undermanned. We were told we had a good chance to become heroes!

MH: What were your duties?

Hansen: They took my friend Günter and me to Phuc Yen, which was an outpost on the inner side of a sharp curve of the Red River. The enemy were just across the water, and we had to stop them from crossing and also keep the road open for our convoys by checking for mines and ambushes. We went out on patrols day and night in the forest or rice paddies, sometimes running into Viets (Viet Minh) and having a shootout. Sometimes they attacked our post. I saw lots of action and soon came to understand why legionnaires looked so tired. I saw terrible things there, but we quickly became hardened soldiers with no scruples. We had to in order to survive. The tortures inflicted on captured legionnaires were unspeakable. We would clear the road of mines by making the local villagers walk along the road ahead of us. It saved us a lot of injuries. I did get a short break when I went to the hospital, where they took shrapnel out of my leg. I was asked to identify a body there. It was Günter, my old friend from basic training.

MH: Did you return to your unit after that?

Hansen: Yes. Matters got worse and worse. Almost every day we ran into Viets and had gunfights. The Viets were very clever with booby traps. A lot of our men were injured or killed that way. Generally, we were hopelessly outnumbered. It was hell. If only we had had the helicopters and firepower of the United States Army. We were trying to

control all of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Later, the Americans just had to cope with South Vietnam.

MH: How did you become involved in Dien Bien Phu?

Hansen: It was mid-March 1954. We all knew about the French army surrounded there. They were having even a worse time than we were. Almost every soldier there had been wounded, but they fought on. One day, our captain asked if anyone would volunteer to parachute into Dien Bien Phu. He said another 1,000 men were needed urgently. He promised a bonus, and our pay was so low that it sounded very tempting. My friend Henry and I volunteered.

MH: Had you learned to parachute in basic training?

Hansen: No. None of us had done that. We were an odd collection of soldiers from all parts of the army—cooks, clerks, legionnaires, any rank. We were to be dropped into the fighting and allocated to units



Left: French Foreign legionnaires and an Algerian guide set up an observation post atop a 200-foot sand dune to protect nearby oil workers from attack by rebel guerrillas in November 1957. **Above:** His Foreign Legion training completed, 19-year-old Karl Hansen poses in his dress uniform, which he rarely wore thereafter.

when we got there. As soon as a plane load had assembled, they took us to the airfield in Hanoi and strapped a parachute onto each one of us for the first time. I remember standing in the pouring rain as this was done carefully and checked by experts, but we had no instruction about jumping or how to land or control the chute. We were



Top: A French forward post near the border between Indochina and China. The Red River area was the scene of constant fighting between the French and Viet Minh during the French Indochina War. **Above:** A French stretcher-bearer scans the terrain outside Dien Bien Phu for casualties while a soldier ventures from one trench to another on April 3, 1954.

loaded up with machine pistol, grenades, knives, bandages and some canned food, and off we went in a Douglas C-47 of the French Air Force. We were all very tense. No one spoke on the flight. We knew we were in for big trouble at Dien Bien Phu. There were about 50 of us, seated on benches along each side of the plane. Only Henry was known to me, and he didn't say much! No one was ill. There were all nationalities, European and Asian.

MH: How did you feel about the jump?

Hansen: Nervous. I couldn't believe I was

doing this! We were soon at the target, and a sergeant up front told us to get ready and checked everyone. A green light went on, the side door opened and out we went, with a good push from that sergeant to make sure no one changed his mind. I was No. 6. It was predawn and dark, but we were not very high. As soon as my chute opened I could see tracers coming up to us and the flashes of small-arms fire. One of the paratroopers was hit, and for an instant I saw him hanging in his harness. We landed straightaway, in mud on a flat plain, but we

had not been taught how to get out of the harness so it took a little time. Already someone was firing at us, and I was hit in the neck and knocked over. Then, all of a sudden, Viet Minh soldiers surrounded me, pointing their guns at my belly.

MH: Did anyone put up a fight?

Hansen: A few of us let off some rounds, but it was over in seconds. It would have been futile. There were so many of them. I couldn't understand what had happened, but later I realized we had jumped too soon. About half of the paratroopers landed outside the French perimeter; the ones who jumped later landed inside and were safe.

MH: What were the Viet Minh like?

Hansen: I think the guys who took us were irregulars. They were very active, small men wearing loose, black trousers and black blouses, and they each wore a conical straw hat. They were armed with guns and machetes and were well-disciplined. There was an older man in charge, about 45, and when he gave orders they all jumped.

MH: How were you treated then?

Hansen: They took all our arms and other belongings with a lot of punching and kicking and tied our arms behind our backs with rough rope. After an hour, we were prodded with rifle butts and made to march north. One of our lads had sprained or broken his ankle on landing and could not keep up, so after half an hour they shot him. For four days they made us walk all day, but allowed us to rest at night, when they gave us some water and a handful of rice. We lost 10 more men on the journey. Some just died of exhaustion, but I remember two Spaniards who were a bit wild. One of them was kicked in the groin so he immediately kicked back, then both broke loose and ran for the woods. They only got about 20 yards before being riddled with bullets.

MH: How did you sleep at night?

Hansen: We were so tired we managed to sleep, but our hands were kept tied. The mosquitoes were gigantic, and we could not swat them, of course. The monsoon was blowing and it was wet, so the leeches were terrible. My wrists were raw from the rough tight rope. We expected to be shot for no reason at any time. It was frightening.

MH: Where did they take you?

Hansen: On the fourth day, in the afternoon, we came to a village of native huts. It was deserted, no civilians at all. In the middle of the village were three cages made of bamboo, each about 6 by 10 feet. There were now only 25 of us, and they put us into these cages with a few banana leaves on top for protection from the sun. They tied the doors with rope only, but there were very alert guards to keep us in. About half an hour later, they took one of us into one of the houses to be interrogated, and soon we heard screaming. It was terrifying. After 15 minutes they carried him out. He was unable to walk, bruised, burned and bloody all over. They questioned a few more in the

same way that evening, but my turn did not come until the following morning.

MH: Tell us what happened.

Hansen: I was taken into the house where there were two Viet Minh at a table. They made me sit in a chair and tied my arms to the chair arms. They spoke in French. I gave them my name and number and then they fired a lot of questions: What was the strength of my company? Where was it? Who were the officers? What kind of weapons did we have? I explained I was but a humble legionnaire and had no knowledge of those things. Wham, they punched me in the face. They asked again. Wham again. It went on for about 15 minutes until I was bleeding and black and blue.

MH: Was that the only time you were interrogated there?

Hansen: Oh no. We all had seven or eight sessions. At one time, they promised me safe passage back to Germany if I gave information. Another time they gave me electric shock treatment. But I didn't know the answers to the questions.

MH: Did anyone break and cooperate?

Hansen: Two people disappeared mysteriously. They were driven away in a covered truck one day. We think they changed sides and were sent to an indoctrination camp. We were never sure about it.

MH: How long did this torture go on?

Hansen: About a week. We were completely exhausted and spent most of the time sleeping in the cages. We had water three times a day, which was not nearly enough, and some rice in the evenings. Some were sick with fever, but there was no medical help. We began to realize we had been captured in order to be interrogated. We could just as easily have been shot on landing. These guys had no mercy.

MH: What happened to you?

Hansen: They kept us in our cages for about two months. The war was long over, but we knew nothing about it. I was down to 110 pounds from 190 pounds, and very weak. From time to time someone would die or the guards would offer some new brutality. Once, they made five prisoners dig a hole about 10 feet long and 5 feet deep. Then the Viet made them stand on the edge of it and shot them. Their bodies were just covered with earth and we were told there was still plenty of room there for others. My friend Henry was one of the five.

MH: How did all of this end?

Hansen: One day something strange happened. They let us out of the cages and gave us good clothes and good food, juice and cigarettes. We were put back in the cages at night but could get out during the day, though the guards were still watching us closely. We improved quickly, and after a week they put us on a covered truck; there were now only 17 of us. We drove for about three hours with the flaps down. We heard voices when we stopped and were soon allowed off the truck. We could see a Red



Top: Legionnaires of the 3rd R.E.I. (Régiment Étranger d'Infanterie) rest while their water cart is filled from the Red River—an operation that always offered the possibility of an ambush. **Above:** Hansen after his release from captivity in Vietnam. He had lost 80 pounds, but after three weeks he was judged fit to ship out to Algeria.

Cross truck a little way off. One of the Viet Minh officers went to the Red Cross vehicle and came back with four Viet officers who had been prisoners, all looking fit and well and unmarked! They then allowed us to walk to the Red Cross truck in exchange. There was a Legion officer and a nurse there. We were still in a poor shape—all with septic cuts, skin infections, and some quite ill and with fever. They took us to the French hospital in Haiphong, and we got a lot of back pay—and a medal! I was in the hospital for three weeks before I was sent back to my old company at Kien An, where they gave me a great welcome. The fighting had finished and French forces were

gradually being withdrawn. My unit was in Vietnam for another two months, moving to Haiphong and Saigon before we left Southeast Asia at last. That was the end of my first year in the Foreign Legion.

MH: Did you return to France?

Hansen: No such luck. We sailed to North Africa and landed at Bône in Algeria on September 16, 1954.

MH: Were you able to rest for a while?

Hansen: Oh, no. There was big trouble. Algeria was a French colony and, like in Indochina, an independence movement had sprung up, led by a madman named Ahmed Ben Bella. He had been working away quietly for years and had hidden caches of arms all over the country. Now his followers, *fellaghas*, were infiltrating from Tunisia, where they had trained, and were terrorizing the country. Ben Bella had learned a lot from Ho Chi Minh, but so had we. The terrorists were recruiting men in Algeria, murdering anyone who would not join them. Lonely farms and peaceful villages were wiped out, and it had all begun just a month before we got there.

MH: So you found yourself in a war similar to the one in Indochina, searching out terrorists and protecting the population?

Hansen: In some ways, yes, but the terrain was so different. Here it was rocky desert and steep hills with deep ravines and little water. There was a little tree and brush cover. It was blazing hot in the day but almost freezing at night. Everywhere there was dust and terrible black scorpions.

MH: Were you issued better equipment?

Hansen: No. We used the same clothing



A French officer issues identity cards to Algerians returning from work at Tunis. In addition to engaging guerrillas in Algeria, the French tried to isolate the Front Pour la Libération Nationale guerrillas by means of a 300-mile-long electrified fence along the border with Tunisia.

and the same MAT 49 machine pistols, but we looked with envy at the officers and NCOs, who had M-1 carbines. We had light machine guns and mortars, and grenades, of course. Our weapons were not too sophisticated, but we could handle them well.

MH: Were you at full strength?

Hansen: Never. There were a lot of new recruits but still not enough. Our company had a captain as CO (commanding officer) and a Lieutenant Defosse as XO (executive officer). They were French, of course, and had a wild bunch to control, but they earned our great respect. They led from the front, and we would follow those guys anywhere.

MH: Tell us about your duties.

Hansen: We patrolled the Tunisian frontier to stop the rebels, the *fellaghas*, from crossing. There was a large French army there—regulars, paras and so on—and mounted Moroccan troopers called *Spahis*. They were good. We moved from place to place along the mountainous border. We would stay a few days and patrol the surrounding country and clean it up, then move on and repeat the process. Patrols would last from a few hours to four days, and we walked all the way! A little later, some halftracks appeared, and they would drop us off somewhere and pick us up later some miles away. It was hard, grinding, dirty, sweaty work, and very bad for the feet.

MH: Did you ever meet any *fellaghas*?

Hansen: Oh, yes. Our camp was at Arris, and we patrolled the Cheria-Guentis road, chasing *fellaghas* all over the Aures-Nemenchia region. Our first contact was a caravan. We saw it coming and waited in hiding. There were 35 men and 20 camels, but as soon as we showed ourselves they began to shoot. We expected that to happen, so we opened up with the 12.7mm machine guns mounted on the halftracks. There were dead men and camels everywhere, and other camels were running away. We counted 32 dead *fellaghas* and two wounded, who did not have to suffer long! The *fellaghas* did not take prisoners, and neither did we. The camels were loaded with weapons. It was my first firefight since Indochina, and I had not lost my touch. It felt good.

MH: Did your unit get any help from the local population?

Hansen: Not much. They were too frightened. We had some native scouts who could help us interrogate and serve as guides. They were a sadistic lot and could make the toughest prisoner "sing like a bird." Prisoners always ended up dead.

MH: What civilians were you protecting?

Hansen: There were French colonials living in Algeria who had been there for generations. They ran businesses, mines and so on, often in remote areas where they were in great danger. We encouraged them

to leave, but many hung on and were tortured or murdered.

MH: Were there any organized attacks on fixed targets?

Hansen: Sometimes large forces of *fellaghas* would be spotted, and we would combine with other units to attack them. Usually they were in a village or on a mountain-top and well dug in. Those guys could fight like mad and were well trained. But we had good spotter aircraft—little Pipers, whose crews told us where to go, how many enemies and so on—and they would swoop over them and throw grenades down, time after time. We could call up bombers, too. Several times when we had a large group of rebels surrounded, we were told to retire 300 meters and the bombers would drop napalm. That was awful stuff, but it was more effective than explosives in the rocky terrain. I have seen rifle barrels bent by the heat of napalm. We counted 180 dead *fellaghas* after one attack.

MH: Were you ever wounded?

Hansen: No. The closest I came to death was in a skirmish. We were taken by helicopter to help another company in a fight with 250 rebels. We were dropped off in the battle, right in the middle of hell. We were in rocky country with dense brush. The legionnaire next to me suddenly screamed in pain with a bullet through his elbow, and this distracted me for a moment, so I didn't

see the *fellagha* just 10 meters away. I just heard a click and turned to see his rifle aimed at me. It had misfired. I had my MAT 49, and he was dead before he could reload. Man, was I shaken up!

MH: How was morale in general?

Hansen: Being on the go all the time—all that fighting, the exhaustion, seeing legionnaires killed or wounded—caused tension among us, and fights between soldiers became more frequent and more vicious. Most of the fights were about nothing. We needed a rest, but there was no hope. Helicopters picked us up, took us to fights and brought us back to camp afterward. Even on our rest days we were usually called out in a hurry. We took losses, but the *fellaghas* were getting beaten all over the country. We stayed in Arris until the fall of 1956. I spent a few weeks in the hospital with a broken elbow I got jumping from a burning truck, but I was soon back on patrol and seeing a lot of action. Then I was sent to a commando course at Biskra. We were taught jujitsu, silent killing, fighting with knives and explosives. In groups of five we had to light the fuses of explosives in the ground and then stand there until all the fuses were lit. Then we could walk away.

MH: Did you return to the same unit?

Hansen: I went back to my section. It was like returning to my family. We were soon in action again—in the snow, in Algeria! We fought about 20 *fellaghas* in a blizzard and killed the whole band. Four days later we had another big battle, together with our 3rd Regiment, against 250 rebels. There were many casualties on both sides, and a few rebels escaped after dark. My friend Wim Dejong got a bullet in his spine that night and was paralyzed, but he did live. And our officer, Lieutenant Fred Metzger, was killed when he stepped on a mine.

Metzger had been an officer in the *Waffen SS* during World War II, and the French appreciated his talents. He was a first-rate officer.

MH: What was your next assignment after that?

Hansen: By April 1957, our area was clean, so we moved from Arris to Promontoire, lower down although still in the hills near the Tunisian border. Our mission was still search and destroy. The rebels were becoming more sophisticated and now wore uniforms, but they went on destroying villages, intimidating the people. We often found bodies of women and children, tortured and hacked apart. We had no sympathy for these terrorists. We had become sadistic ourselves.

MH: Did you take any prisoners during that mission?

Hansen: Oh, yes. They were

tough to interrogate, but some of our guys had ingenious methods of inflicting pain.

MH: Had the fighting intensified?

Hansen: We had one of our worst fights there. On June 2, 1957, I was in a routine patrol to a village where about 45 people lived. We searched everywhere, but it was clean. Then, just as we were about to leave, all hell broke loose—bullets came flying from the surrounding bush, mortar bombs struck the village, and we scrambled for cover. I got into a house, a *mechta*, with two other legionnaires and began to fire into bushes where I thought the rebels were hiding. There must have been 200 or more. There were three civilians in the house, and they were all killed in the fight. Gustav, a legionnaire friend, was killed, and I was convinced I would not survive. All the houses were occupied by legionnaires and after an hour we saw the first *fellaghas* come into the village, but they didn't last long. Soon the village square seemed full of bodies, ours and theirs. We were holding out with difficulty when we heard a heavenly sound—our halftracks were coming up the path to the village and helicopters were overhead. About 300 men came to our aid, and just when I was down to my last clip of ammunition, I saw a *fellagha* run to our *mechta* and jump through the door. I had to finish him off with my knife, but another *fellagha* immediately threw a grenade into the house. It took me only a split second to get out through the window and into a hand-to-hand fight outside. Derk, the other legionnaire in the house, didn't make it out. Now I could see legionnaires from other units, with unfamiliar faces, but all wearing the yellow scarf around the arm so we could recognize each other. The halftracks were firing machine guns and 60mm mortars from the road. It went on until dark, when

all the houses were burning and all the civilians dead. I could not have gone on much longer when the shooting stopped and the halftracks came into the village with their headlights on. What a scene. Death and destruction everywhere. We finished off the wounded *fellaghas* and took our wounded to the road, where the helicopters could land. My friend Bengt lay with his intestines exposed, but he was still alive and he recovered later. We counted 184 dead *fellaghas*. We lost nine dead and 17 wounded. The rest of that terrorist group, 77 of them, were hunted down and killed by another unit. We were given a whole day of rest for that!

MH: Was it duty and work all the time? Didn't you get any R&R or leave?

Hansen: It was always like that. Never more than one day of rest. Patrols were out all the time. When one came back to camp, another left. We were overworked and underpaid. If we complained, we were told: "No one forced you to join the Foreign Legion. Just shut up." We had joined for five years. Some killed themselves, some deserted—same ending!

MH: Did you stay at Promontoire for the rest of your service?

Hansen: No, we left in June 1957 for the Morice Line, an electrified barbed-wire fence that ran along the border with Tunisia for 300 miles, from Bône on the coast south to Tebessa. It was 2 meters high, and on each side there was a fence of wire sloping from its top at 45 degrees. There was a transformer every 10 kilometers where that section could be switched off, and a railway line with deserted stations ran alongside the fence. We lived in an old station and patrolled 10 kilometers of fence in each direction, sometimes having to remove dead animals or people from the



Lieutenant Kerros, whom Hansen described as "an outstanding, brave man," test-fires a captured enemy pistol. It was not unusual for the legionnaires to place the tin can target on a prisoner's head.



BRAN LOOSMORE

Following one of several fierce firefights that occurred during his last three months of service, Hansen (with hat on knee) and comrades await their transport by the roadside, under the shade of some rare vegetation.

wire. We saw some action and lost some men, but compared with other posts it was peaceful. About that time the *fellaghas* changed their name to *Front Pour la Libération Nationale* (FLN, the National Liberation Front). They put up posters all over the country.

MH: Were the regular French army soldiers capable of patrolling the Morice Line?

Hansen: Yes, they took over, and we went to Djidjelli, an attractive old port with a big fort on the coast about 150 miles west of Bône for two weeks' leave—a miracle, the first relaxation I had since I left Indochina. But the leave was ruined by a horrible incident. About 15 kilometers west of our camp was a lighthouse kept by a French civilian, his young wife and two little girls. They kept in touch with us by radio every four hours. One morning five hours passed with no message, so 30 of us scrambled into trucks and raced out there. No one greeted us.

MH: What had happened?

Hansen: We rushed in and there on the stairs the young lighthouse keeper lay, his throat cut with the lid of a sardine tin that lay nearby. Upstairs, his wife lay, half naked. Her throat had been cut and she was disemboweled. Then there was a scream from a legionnaire in another room. The little girls were hanging by their feet from the ceiling, also dead. It was the most grisly sight I ever saw. We were furious. I had never seen legionnaires cry in anger before.

MH: Were you able to find the killers?

Hansen: Oh, yes. We followed tracks over sand dunes and up into the hills to an abandoned village. That night we closed in and could see some men around a fire. Our scout said they were talking about the lighthouse. We could see 19 but had to check out the *mechtas*. Eight of us who had

been through commando courses crept to the houses. Walter and I found two men sleeping. It was the first time I did silent killing with a knife—messy, but it worked! We got back to the others without raising the alarm and took aim with rifles. Lieutenant Kerros fired the first shot with his revolver and the rest joined in immediately, killing 12 outright and wounding the other seven, one of whom our scout killed right away. We had to restrain him from killing them all, he was so angry. One of the prisoners had a wallet belonging to the lighthouse keeper, which made matters easier. They were stripped and hung upside down from the trees. I shall not say what happened then, but those guys suffered horribly before they died. That was the most disturbing episode of my service in the legion. I dream about it. It still affects me deeply.

MH: What did you do after that?

Hansen: We spent a few weeks at a post on the shore, guarding the road, making forays into the hills and having occasional encounters with *fellaghas*. It was then late August 1957. I had been in the Legion four years. It had changed me. I was due for release in another year, but the Legion played a little trick. I was sent to Ain-el-Hadjer for a course for promotion to corporal. I had a very tough time for three months, but I did pass.

MH: How was your promotion received in the regiment?

Hansen: I was given a great welcome. I had more responsibility and had to lead one of the four groups in our section. We still went on search-and-destroy patrols into the hills, sometimes for four days at a time. Our feet suffered a lot, bleeding often. Our boots were poor, and if we needed new ones, we got secondhand boots.

MH: At the time, did it seem the war with

the *fellaghas* was being won?

Hansen: The action was moving to the cities. *Fellaghas* were using bombs and grenades in Algiers and other towns, terrorizing the civilians. However many we killed, there seemed to be many more, and they were better fighters—better trained and equipped. Early in 1958, we surprised a group that was setting up an ambush on the road. It was a fierce fight, and we were exhausted, but we got them all. The next day, we had an even bigger contest when we went in Piasecki H-21 "Flying Banana" helicopters to help some units surrounding a large band of 180 *fellaghas* and their camels and mules. Then the Douglas B-26 came with napalm and 20mm cannons, and there was not much left of them after that.

MH: Did you finish your service at Djidjelli, by the sea?

Hansen: No. In March we moved back to the mountains, to Guema. It was a long journey, and, as usual, the vehicles would drop us off somewhere and pick us up later in the day. We walked almost all the way! It was cold in the mountains and we had little food—often just a tin of sardines between two or three. Thank heavens for pinard! Our convoy was about 3 kilometers long with an armored halftrack between every three trucks, but even that was ambushed and we had a tough fight and chase to clean up the rebels.

MH: What was Guema like?

Hansen: It was a railway junction, a pleasant, clean town where we had to patrol the tracks to keep them open. It was quiet until August when, one day, we were taken in big helicopters to help some legionnaires trapped on a hilltop. It was ferocious fighting again. I saw a *fellagha* with a rifle fire at me and miss. I had only a few weeks of service left. Helicopters were taking away our wounded while the fight was at its height, when Lieutenant Defloesse told me I was in charge of the evacuation and to go with them. I was shocked. Then the helicopter pilot flew to our camp and told me he had orders to leave me. Defloesse knew I had only a few days to serve and wanted me out of the fight! That day I was put on the train before my unit came back to camp. I never saw them again. I left the Legion after five years and did not go back. It nearly broke my heart! What a marvelous fighting machine. *Vive la Légion!* □

Brian Loosmore is a British Army veteran who served in Malaya and in Germany. For further reading, he recommends: Doctor at Dien Bien Phu, by Paul Grauwis; and The French Foreign Legion, by Douglas Porch.

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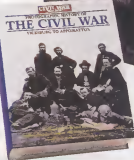


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During the reign of Queen Victoria, the British soldier adapted to fighting in many climes—and generally prevailed.

By Jon Guttman

No national fighting force in history was called upon to fight over a wider variety of terrain, deal with a greater variety of adversaries and adapt to such a wide range of tactics within the reign of a single monarch than the British Army of the Victorian era. Much has been written on the numerous wars and campaigns of that period, but the ultimate enforcer of the empire, the rank-and-file British soldier, is usually represented as a steadfast cliché in a sun helmet. Ian Knight's new book, *Go to Your God Like a Soldier: The British Soldier Fighting for Empire, 1837–1902*

(Greenhill Books, London, and Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, Pa., 1996, \$49.95), treats "Tommy Atkins" with rather more depth and scope, covering not just his uniforms and weaponry, but the necessary equipment for everyday life between battles.

When Queen Victoria ascended to the throne in 1837, the uniforms, equipment and tactics of British troops had changed little from those that they had used when Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, commanded them at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Late in 1837, British troops had to put down a rebellion in Canada, and they suffered more from the cold than from the enemy. The same could be said of the Second Burma War of 1852, during which more Redcoats fell victim to heatstroke than to the Burmese.

The Crimean War, best remembered for the stirring Napoleonic-era battles of the Alma, Balaklava and Inkerman in 1854, subsequently degenerated into a stalemate outside the Russian fortress of Sebastopol, presaging the trench warfare of World War I with all its attendant miseries. After the Crimean War ended in 1856, the continuing expansion of British interests in Asia and Africa finally brought on a slow but steady process of reform in the army, most



British soldiers cross the Alma River near the bridge destroyed by the Russians in September 1854. Following the Crimean War, the British army changed considerably.

dramatically exemplified by the 1873–74 war against the West African Asante (or Ashanti), for which Brig. Gen. Sir Garnet Wolseley replaced the scarlet uniforms of his soldiers with a practical, neutral gray uniform of his own design. By the time of Victoria's death in 1901, the transition from Wellington to Wolseley was complete—Britain had an army prepared for the 20th century.

Britain was, of course, one of the leading industrial powers of the 19th century, and Knight traces the effect that the technology of the period had on the army's campaigns—not only devastating weaponry like the machine gun but also improved medical techniques. A dramatic illustration of the widening technological gulf between the British and many of their opponents can be seen in a photograph in Knight's book depicting the early field use of mobile x-ray units during the Boer War, contrasted with an adjacent photograph of the back of Private J. Steele of the 4th Dragoon Guards after the Battle of Abu Klea in 1885, showing a sword cut from a Sudanese Dervish, from which Steele somehow managed to recover.

Along with examining the army's technical developments, the author looks at the human side of the primarily career soldiers who manned the empire's faraway bastions.

Numerous firsthand accounts by officers and men provide insights into such aspects of military life as the army's way of reflecting the British class system, a soldier's motives for enlisting and staying on, and how a soldier adjusted to living and fighting in strange and exotic locales.

One interesting revelation concerns the soldier's status in Victorian society. The officers and gentlemen—who usually bought their commissions first, and learned how to command their troops later—were socially acceptable. In the enlisted ranks, on the other hand, "going for a soldier" was widely regarded not as a noble

enterprise but as a final fallback for people who lacked the skills to find a productive, respectable niche in civilian industry. A letter from Private Donald McDonald of 2nd Battalion, 21st Royal Scots Fusiliers, to his brother regarding his enlistment in September 1878 provides a good example of the stigma attached to soldiers. He entreats, "let my poor mother know about it privately and not to let anyone know about it except our own family."

Much of the public's jaundiced perception of the army's enlisted troops was based on fact, although it was not helped much by statements, like the Duke of Wellington's, that the army was "composed of the scum of the earth." It took a famous victory like Inkerman, a glorified defeat like the Charge of the Light Brigade, or the awarding of the Victoria Cross—or better still, the awarding of a record 11 Victoria Crosses for the defense of Rorke's Drift—to elevate the British soldier above his less-than-exalted standing in the public eye.

Profusely illustrated with drawings, paintings (albeit printed in black and white) and photographs that enhance the text by conveying the feel of the times, *Go to Your God Like a Soldier* is a useful guide to the campaigns of the British Empire—and of the

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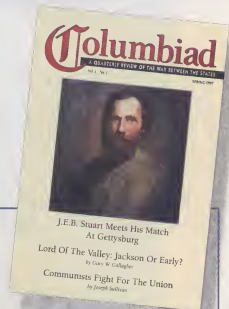
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British soldiers
September 1855

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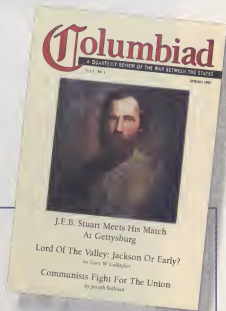
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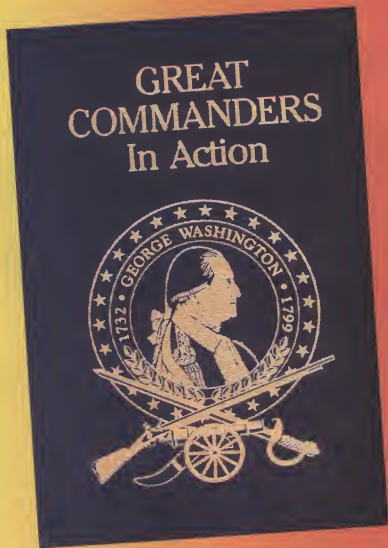
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often-underappreciated fighting men who built and preserved that empire.

The *Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades*, edited by Jonathan Riley-Smith, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, \$39.95.

The mere mention of the word "crusade" evokes a powerful image in the minds of people today. It is a word that is applied to nearly everything, from a crusade against illiteracy to describing Batman as a caped crusader. Yet the term, which is so commonly used today, originated in a military venture of complicated and often misguided intentions. The Crusades of medieval Europe were originally designed to deliver the Holy Land from the hands of the Muslims and place it under the protection of Christendom. Later the term was applied to any war against non-Christians and even against fellow Christians who had been pronounced heretics. The Crusading movement began in 1096—achieving success in 1099, followed by centuries of failure—and the last great Crusade ended around 1700. A recent publication, *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades*, examines the entire scope of the crusades in 15 articles by various authors, all specialists in their respective areas.

As the saying goes, "a picture is worth a thousand words," and this is certainly true for this encyclopedic work. In addition to more than 100 black-and-white illustrations, the book contains 35 color plates, ranging from photographs of architecture to paintings from the Crusading era. This wide assortment of illustrations vividly portrays the Crusades not only as they were seen at the time but also as they were viewed throughout the ages.

Perhaps of greatest interest to military enthusiasts are the chapters on the military orders. The Hospitallers, Templars and Teutonic Knights, as well as a host of lesser-known orders, were the best-trained and disciplined forces within the Crusading armies and controlled a large portion of the garrisoned territories long after those whose religious zeal had waned returned to Europe.

The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades is an invaluable resource to those interested in the Crusades. Yet it is also of immense use to those interested in the Ottoman Empire, the Baltic Region, the Spanish Reconquista and papal history. The only weak point of the work is that it devotes only one article to the role of Islam in these ventures. Although Robert Irwin's article is of excellent quality, it only whets one's appetite for more on the subject.

Timothy May

Victory and Deceit, by James F. Dunnigan and Albert A. Nofi, Quill, New York, 1996, \$16.

The famous Chinese strategist Sun-tzu observed: "There can never be enough de-

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For anyone interested in military history, this is essential and rewarding reading.

Michael D. Hull

THE SOFTWARE BOOKSHELF

 **Close Combat**, a Windows 95 CD-ROM for \$44.95 from Microsoft (800-426-9400, <http://www.microsoft.com>), is a World War II-era strategy game that focuses on the human element of war amid real-time action and historically accurate situations.

Close Combat puts the user in command of men who act and fight like real soldiers. They are no longer simply pieces on a chessboard, but rather soldiers who are affected both physically and mentally by the battle situations they face. The men fight heroically, cower, break, rally, obey or sometimes disobey, based on the orders you issue. As the unit commander, you can experience the sights and sounds of a "live" battlefield while leading men in combat. The shooting starts the second the men step off at Omaha Beach, and it does not let up until they have taken St. Lô. Continuous real-time action, historically accurate World War II situations, weapons and terrain, head-to-head play with a modem or LAN, and archival film footage and photos all add to the gaming experience.

With its revolutionary real-time engine, great sound effects and vivid graphics, **Close Combat** takes a quantum step in making wargaming more realistic. The only catch is that users will have to finally break down and put Windows 95 on their PCs to experience it.

Other software releases of interest include **Battle of the Ironclads** from Grolier (203-797-3530), an accurate, riveting first-person simulation of the Civil War battle between *Monitor* and *Merrimack*. **Battleground 3: Waterloo** from Empire Interactive (410-933-9191) is a historical strategy game that gives the user the chance to turn Napoleon's ultimate defeat into a glorious victory. **Robert E. Lee: Civil War General** from Sierra On-Line (800-757-7707) allows the user to fight the Civil War from the Confederate perspective. **Steel Panthers II** from SSI (800-601-7529) depicts tank warfare from the 1950s to the present day. And **Third Reich** by Avalon Hill (800-999-3222) is the perfect game to explore the many "what ifs" of WWII.

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PERSONALITY

Continued from page 12

The cruising season of 1814 opened, incredibly, with naval superiority on the side of the Americans. By his energetic efforts, Macdonough had built—or otherwise obtained—a fleet of 13 vessels, of which his 26-gun flagship *Saratoga* was the largest and most powerful. The squadron also included the 20-gun brig *Eagle*, the 17-gun schooner *Ticonderoga*, the seven-gun sloop *Preble* and 10 gunboats—all manned by nearly 900 sailors.

The British, meanwhile, had not been idle. In the wake of Napoleon's abdication, 15,000 British troops were sent to Montreal in an attempt to take control of strategic Lake Champlain.

On the lake, British Captain George Downie's squadron consisted of the 36-gun frigate *Confiance*; the brig *Linnet*, with 16 guns; the sloops *Chubb*, 11 guns, and *Finch*, 10 guns; and 12 gunboats. The total complement of officers and men was between 900 and 1,000.

On September 1, 1814, a 10,000-man British army under Lt. Gen. Sir George Prevost crossed the Canadian border and advanced along the western shore of Lake Champlain. Proceeding slowly along bad roads, the British troops camped eight miles from Plattsburgh, N.Y. Most of the town's inhabitants fled, and Brig. Gen. Alexander Macomb's soldiers worked to strengthen the defenses.

Prevost decided that to take Plattsburgh he needed the help of the British fleet, Macdonough, knowing that his squadron would be at a disadvantage against the British on the open lake, deployed his vessels in Plattsburgh Bay to force the British vessels to pass between them and the shore.

On the morning of September 7, Prevost wrote to Downie, who was waiting 15 miles from Plattsburgh, asking if he felt strong enough to engage the American fleet. Downie replied that he would go into action as soon as *Confiance* was ready, but that would take a few days.

An unfavorable wind caused a further delay, and it was not until the morning of September 11 that Downie's fleet sailed into Plattsburgh Bay under a light wind. The action began at 9 a.m., as Downie tried to place *Confiance* as close alongside *Saratoga* as possible. He eventually anchored about 300 yards from Macdonough's flagship, then poured a destructive broadside into *Saratoga*.

The British prospects of victory soon lessened when Downie was killed. *Finch* was disabled by *Ticonderoga* and drifted aground. *Chubb* drifted out of control, crippled by *Eagle*. *Preble* was hit severely by the British gunboats and had to retire.

British success now depended on *Confiance*. If she could overcome *Saratoga* without suffering harm, she could easily sweep

along the rest of the American line. By 10:30 a.m., it seemed as if the British might be gaining the upper hand.

Both *Saratoga* and *Confiance* had been extensively damaged, and Macdonough's starboard guns were in no condition to hit back at the British. Macdonough, however, exhibited superior seamanship when he swung his ship around using anchor and hawsers, enabling *Saratoga*'s port battery to punish *Confiance* severely. *Confiance* tried the same maneuver, but without success. Badly damaged, she struck her colors.

Macdonough then swung *Saratoga* around to hammer *Linnet*, which struck her colors 15 minutes later. The British gunboats fled. Macdonough by forcing the British to fight on his terms, had achieved complete victory. The Americans lost 52 killed and 58 wounded, and the British lost more than 80 killed and 100 wounded.

On the following morning, the British land force, which had seen little action, withdrew to the sound of the Americans' cheering the naval victory. Further offensive actions against the United States were abandoned, and the British now had no ground upon which to demand territorial adjustments at the Ghent peace talks.

Commended for his "foresight, accurate reasoning, undaunted perseverance, gallantry, and skill in fighting," Macdonough was voted thanks and a gold medal by Congress. The states of Vermont and New York presented him with estates.

After serving as commandant of the Navy Yard at Portsmouth, N.H., from 1815 to 1818, Captain Macdonough was given command of the frigate *Guerrière*. He conveyed the newly appointed American minister, G.W. Campbell, to Russia, and then joined the Mediterranean squadron.

Differences with his commander over a court-martial issue later led to Macdonough's return home. In 1820, he was assigned to the new 74-gun *Ohio*, and four years later he was again sailing the Mediterranean, this time as a commodore in command of the squadron.

In 1825, Macdonough received word of the death of his beloved wife, and he asked to be relieved of command of the squadron flagship, *Constitution*, due to declining health. Longing to see his native land again, he sailed for home aboard the merchantman *Edwin*, but died at sea while still 600 miles from New York.

Thomas Macdonough was buried in the plot belonging to his wife's family, in a cemetery overlooking the Connecticut River, near Middletown. □

t h n For more information on the Great Lakes battles during the War of 1812, go to <http://www.thehistorynet.com> on the World Wide Web and see "Perry Prevails: The Battle of Lake Erie," by Eric G. Swedin, which will be published starting the week of April 17, 1997, on TheHistoryNet.

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NAPOLEON IN ITALY

Continued from page 32

tive, but now the Austrian Archduke Charles began assembling 50,000 troops in the Friuli and the Tyrol. Without waiting for reinforcements, Bonaparte planned a two-prong pre-emptive advance on Vienna. On March 1, Generals Sérurier and Jean-Baptiste Jules Bernadotte forced the capitulation of Primolano. The town of Sacile on the Tagliamento River was taken on March 16 after Guieu, who replaced Augereau, and Bernadotte surprised the Austrians. Masséna smashed Archduke Charles' army at Tarvis on March 22, and then Trieste, with its great arsenal, fell to the rapidly advancing French army. On April 18, the Preliminaries of Leoben were opened, and by October 17, 1797, the final Peace of Campo Formio was signed by Austria and France. Among the many concessions in the treaty, Austria agreed to recognize Bonaparte's creation of the new Cisalpine Republic, formed by uniting Milan, Bologna and Modena.

Bonaparte's mastery of the tactical offensive, his brilliant use of the central position, and his concentration of all forces at the right place and time thwarted four Austrian attempts to rescue Mantua. That concentration was achieved by the mobility of the French soldiers and the determination and fighting abilities of Bonaparte's lieutenants—Masséna, Augereau, Sérurier and Joubert, and the rising stars Murat, Bessières and Lannes.

In his report to the Directoire from Milan on December 7, 1796, General Henri Jacques Guillaume Clarke, then chief of the Topographical Bureau in the Ministry of War, wrote of Napoleon Bonaparte: "The General-In-Chief has rendered the most important services....The fate of Italy has several times depended on his learned combinations. There is nobody here who does not look upon him as a man of genius, and he is effectively that. He is feared, loved, and respected in Italy....A healthy judgment, enlightened ideas, put him abreast of distinguishing the true from the false....His manner of execution is learned and well calculated. Bonaparte can bear himself with success in more than one career. His superior talents and his knowledge give him the means....Do not think, Citizen Directors, that I am speaking of him from enthusiasm. It is with calm that I write, and no interest guides me except that of making you know the truth. Bonaparte will be put by posterity in the rank of the greatest men." □

For further reading, *Napoleonic buff* Jeremy Green recommends: *Napoleon in Italy*, by E. Andrew; and *The 1796 Campaign in Italy*, by Karl von Clausewitz.

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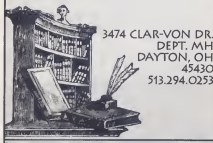
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INTRIGUE

Continued from page 14

projects that those scientists were working on. He also passed on to the Soviets information about top defense scientists in West Germany, including nuclear physicists and chemical warfare experts.

Whalen's position as JIOA director later raised disturbing questions regarding other services he may have provided the Soviets, the most obvious being whether he helped bring a spy or saboteur to the United States. In 1959 and 1960, while Whalen was JIOA director, 158 more scientists were brought to the United States under the project. According to Norris, "They were mostly younger people with a bright future who didn't think they could get the opportunity to utilize their talents in Germany." In addition, the JIOA was still bringing in older scientists, primarily Austrians, who had acquired their scientific reputations when Austria was part of Adolf Hitler's Third Reich.

Sometimes their past association with Hitler resulted in immigration problems for the scientists. A physicist, for example, was returned to Germany in 1959 because of his Nazi past. Fritz Rossmann, former chief of the atmospheric electricity section of the German Glider Research Institute in Braunschweig, arrived in the United States under Paperclip, went to work for the Army Ballistic Missile Agency in Huntsville, Ala., and then transferred to Patrick Air Force Base in Florida. Rossmann was unable to obtain permanent residency because of his wartime Nazi Party and SS memberships, and because he had been arrested twice by U.S. Army Counter Intelligence Corps agents and convicted by a German denazification court. He returned to Germany and joined the faculty at the University of Munich.

As JIOA director, Whalen personally signed forms recommending specific Paperclip scientists for immigration under the project, certifying that "these aliens are not now, nor likely to become security threats to the United States," even though the background investigations on several of the scientists had not yet been completed. State and Justice officials approved the scientists' entry visas, in part on the basis of Whalen's recommendation.

Despite Whalen's claims of favorable background investigations, former JIOA officers said that four Austrians in the group had to be returned to Europe because they failed security checks. Whether those who remained included any spies is impossible to determine, since Whalen shredded many JIOA records during that time and the FBI pulled other files during its investigation of his espionage activities.

In July 1960, Whalen had the first of many heart attacks and officially retired

from the military. Whalen's Army Intelligence dossier, however, revealed that he continued to roam the halls of the Pentagon until early 1963, seeking information from classified files and through conversations with officers he knew.

By that time, FBI agents were hot on his trail after his name surfaced in an espionage case involving a Swedish defense ministry official. One of Whalen's colleagues in the JIOA, U.S. Army Colonel Bernard Geehan, later said he would never forget the day that two FBI agents came to his house. "The FBI showed me photos of Whalen, me and some other Army guys, sitting on the couch in the Soviet embassy," recalled Geehan. "These Russians had their arms around us—real buddy, buddy like—and the FBI had pictures of us!"

The FBI asked Whalen to take a lie detector test, and he complied. After detecting a pint of liquor, according to court records, Whalen went to FBI headquarters in Washington and was strapped to a polygraph machine. Two FBI agents grilled him about Edemski and his bank account. Suddenly, in the midst of being questioned, Whalen told the agents he thought he was going to have a heart attack. "Just stop this," he cried. "I will tell you anything I can tell you. Just let me sit down or lie down and rest somewhere."

FBI agent Donald Gruentzel continued the interrogation after Whalen had rested for a while. "We were discussing his finances," Gruentzel later testified, "as to why he had been in debt for such a long period of time, and during '59 and '60 the debts were erased. We suggested that this was the fruit of selling information to the Soviets. And, at this point, he just blurted out, 'OK, you've got me over the barrel. I sold them the stuff.'"

On December 17, 1966, Whalen stood before Federal Judge Oren Lewis in federal court in Alexandria. "You are charged with conniving to get secret documents pertaining to U.S. defense and giving them to the Russians to use against us. Did you do that, Colonel?" asked Judge Lewis.


"Yes, sir," Whalen replied.

After accusing Whalen of "selling me and all your fellow Americans down the river," Judge Lewis sentenced him to 15 years imprisonment. Whalen died of cancer on July 15, 1986.

Today, in the aftermath of the Cold War, it seems ironic that the military officers who ran Project Paperclip were, in the end, betrayed by one of their own. Their Machiavellian philosophy—that the ends justified the means—had been used to justify bringing Nazi war criminals to America to keep their scientific knowledge away from the Soviets. But ultimately, with the assistance of William Whalen, the Soviets obtained that knowledge anyway. Even now the full extent of his betrayal remains open to speculation. □

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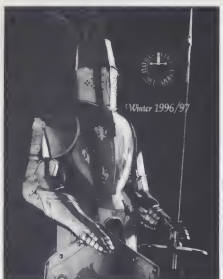
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WEAPONRY

Continued from page 16

Tassafaronga, ten miles away, unloading troops, supplies and ammunition from five transports in mid-daylight."

As Cram nudged his plane higher, the 37-year-old Marine aviator from Berkeley, Calif., might have had second thoughts about volunteering for the mission. There he was with no fighter escort, flying a plane that had a top speed of 120 mph and was overloaded with nearly 4,000 pounds of torpedoes. He had to approach to less than 700 yards from the target, in the face of heavy enemy gunfire.

The sky was clear and visibility was unlimited as Cram swung wide over the bay and out to sea. He took his time, waiting for the dive bombers, so that they would all arrive on target at the same time.

The PBV climbed sluggishly to 6,000 feet, then Cram saw the dive bombers breaking formation to attack. Without hesitation, he started his run on the ships.

From the diving PBV, Cram searched for the ideal target. He finally saw what he had hoped for, two ships close enough together that they overlapped, bow to stern. To reach them, though, he had to fly low and slow past a couple of destroyers.

At 200 mph, the plane began violently shuddering and shaking—it was designed for a maximum dive speed of 150 mph. Cram reduced speed and leveled off.

Incredibly, the gunners on the destroyers at first did not even notice the ungainly PBV. They were concentrating on the dive bombers. Cram remembers that he was so close to the destroyers that he could actually see the gunners as he flew by.

When they finally did notice the PBV, Cram was already lined up on his target. With no aiming or sighting devices, and no way of knowing when to drop the torpedoes, Cram took a totally uneducated guess as to when to release them, while machine-gun bullets ripped into his plane. Perspiration was rolling down his arms and dripping from his brow as he grabbed the "T-handles" on the wires that would trigger the torpedoes. At what seemed to be the last possible instant, he yanked the wires.

Circling high above the PBV, Lieutenant Jose Waterman watched the torpedoes splash into the water, and he could see the foaming trails left by the torpedoes drilling through the water, right toward the transports. Two geysers of water erupted at the side of one transport. Then flames billowed from the ship, and Waterman yelled into his microphone, "Got him!...Got him!"

Cram and his men missed that moment of glory—they were too busy trying to get the ungainly aircraft into a tight 180-degree turn. There was a muffled explosion and the plane staggered. Cram struggled to keep

it clawing for altitude. Somehow, some way, the PBV flew on, out to the open sea.

Cram's respite was brief. Three Mitsubishi A6M Zeros from the crack Tainan Kokutai arrived on the scene and attacked the lumbering amphibian, while its nose gunner fired back. The Japanese flight leader, Petty Officer 1st Class Toshio Ota, was convinced that the PBV was doomed, and only designed to make one firing pass at it. His wingmen, Petty Officer 2nd Class Chuji Sakurai and Seaman 1st Class Yozo Sugawara, were not so sure and pumped dozens of slugs into the plane. Pursued all the way to the airstrip, Cram radioed that he was landing, but was still in the sights of a Japanese pilot.

Luckily for Cram, 2nd Lt. Roger A. Haberman of Marine squadron VMF-121 was landing his smoking and damaged Wildcat fighter when he heard Cram's radio message and saw the planes coming. As the two planes flew over, Haberman pulled up and fired at Sakurai's Zero, which exploded in midair. After making one last strafing run at Cram, Sugawara headed for home.

After landing, Cram and his crew inspected their plane and counted more than 200 bullet holes. An oil tank was riddled and drained dry. A gasoline tank was ruptured, and a propeller was damaged beyond repair. The navigator's hatch was blown off. Yet for all the lead the plane had absorbed, none of the crew was injured.

It was a successful mission. Cram later heard that the troopship he had attacked, *Sasago Maru*, was on fire and a total loss. Two other transports, *Kyushu Maru* and *Azumasen Maru*, were destroyed in subsequent air attacks that same day. The other two transports, along with the destroyers, withdrew with the meager air forces of Guadalcanal in hot pursuit. More than 10,000 Japanese troops had been committed to the invasion force, but most of them did not make it to land. That bizarre air battle did not stop the Japanese from future attempts to take Guadalcanal. But it did give the defenders a little breathing room—just enough to maintain American control of the island.

Two months later, Jack Cram received the Navy Cross and each of his crewman received the Air Medal. Later in the war, Cram headed a bomber squadron operating from two Jima that sank no less than five ships and damaged 53 in a three-month period between April 10 and July 28, 1945. He was later involved in a project to develop a system that would aim and fire rockets from aircraft using radar, which proved to be highly successful in sinking and damaging enemy ships.

One witness, describing Cram's torpedo run, said: "It was like sending a busload of men with .22s to stop a Tiger tank." Cram's resolve and resourcefulness however, prove the military adage: "A stupid idea that works isn't stupid." □

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A reeling South had to wonder at the dismaying news— another great commander shot by his own troops!

By C. Brian Kelly

The bad news for Robert E. Lee and his gray-clad men came in the notoriously rough, wild and tangled country just west of Fredericksburg, Virginia. It came not once, but twice, in a pair of battles fought almost exactly a year apart—in May 1863 and May 1864.

The names resonate today with dread and foreboding, even as more historical echoes. Chancellorsville and the Wilderness! On a modern road map, the two locations would almost merge as a single dot.

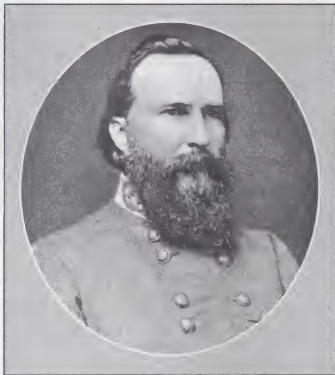
In each case, "Marse Robert's" men, after many hours of exhausting battle, were attempting to make an end run around the Union's mighty Army of the Potomac—a flank attack, moving down back roads, out of sight for a time.

In each case there came a scattering of unexpected shots, from unexpected quarter, followed by startled shouts. In each instance, a year apart, there came more than the usual grief at the sight of a comrade felled—for these two, were no ordinary soldiers (sad as that, too, always would be), but Lee's two valued corps commanders—James Longstreet and Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson.

Worst of all, each had been shot by his own men. In the first such mishap, at Chancellorsville on May 2, 1863, it was Jackson who fell victim to troops of the 18th North Carolina Infantry as he was returning from a reconnaissance of the lines in the gathering darkness. He was not mortally wounded, but so weakened that just as recovery seemed possible he came down with pneumonia and died, late on Sunday, May 10.

The word quickly spread among his comrades. "An irreparable loss," said Lee, who just days earlier, had called Jackson "my right arm." That bitter day was followed by further sad encounters as Americans fought Americans at many other sites strewn with additional casualties, Union and Confederate.

In May of 1864, a year after Jackson's fatal wounding, the rival forces were once



Even after being wounded in the Wilderness, Lt. Gen. James Longstreet justified General Robert E. Lee's faith in him as a loyal and dependable "warhorse" (©1911, Patriot Publishing Company).

again drawn up opposite one another in that wild and tangled terrain, just west of Fredericksburg. This time they prepared for the appropriately named Battle of the Wilderness—famous not only for the storm of shot and shell and the staggering numbers killed, maimed and wounded but also for the fire that sprang up and cremated both the dead and the untended wounded.

Longstreet's I Corps had arrived on May 6—late, but still timely enough to strike at the left flank of Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock's II Corps at 11 a.m. and threatened to roll it up, as Hancock himself admitted, "like a wet blanket."

In the midst of all the tumult that followed came the moment when an officer with Longstreet, Maj. Gen. Joseph Kershaw, saw errant rifles being leveled and pointed toward them, notes Jeffrey D. Wert in his fine biography, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier*. "Friends!" Kershaw shouted, but too late. In the volley of rifle fire that had already

been loosed, two officers and an orderly went down, never to rise again. Another officer, Brig. Gen. G. Moxley Sorrel, saw Longstreet hit. "He was actually lifted straight up and came down hard," said Sorrel later.

"Longstreet reeled in his saddle, his right arm hanging limp at his side," wrote Wert. He had been struck in the throat by a bullet that passed through his shoulder and severed nerves.

Now Longstreet! All onlookers had to wonder and fear for the South. Just a year earlier, at the death of the great Stonewall, many had felt that the cause of the South was lost. And now was Longstreet gone, as well?

It did appear that way, as he struggled to speak, face ashen, bloody foam on his lips. Tell General Lee to have Maj. Gen. Charles Field assume command of the I Corps, he whispered to Sorrel. Somehow, Longstreet summoned the strength to explain the flank maneuver already underway to Field before

being carried off on a stretcher, with a hat placed over his face by a solicitous officer.

Wert writes, "when the troops saw Longstreet, they shouted that he was dead."

But not this tough soldier. With his good left hand, Longstreet lifted the hat and they saw that he was alive. "The burst of voices and flurry of hats excitedly thrown into the air," he said later, "eased my pains somewhat."

Not only did Longstreet recover well—and quickly enough—to go through the remaining months of the Civil War, he outlived most of his fellow stars of the Confederate galaxy: Generals A.P. Hill and J.E.B. Stuart, for instance both were mortally wounded before war's end, and Lee himself died a few years later.

Ironically, too, Longstreet also lived to serve as a minor federal government official appointed to the post by President Ulysses S. Grant—the very man, of course, who, as General Grant, had commanded the Union, at the Wilderness affair that almost cost Longstreet his life. □

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